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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices.

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POSTMASTER: Send all change of address notices, undeliverable copies, subscription orders, and other mail to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Subscription rates: $4.75 a copy, $16.00 one year, $39.00 three years, foreign and Canadian $3.00 a year additional for postage.

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Life and Letters

An Older Dude

ARISTIDES

Five-0. Roman numeral L. Half a century. Five big ones, baby. I refer to my age. This year I turn fifty, with no hope of turning back. It is a bit of an amazement to me. Him Tarzan, me boy, or so I used to think, except that now I am decades older than the inarticulate ape-man himself and a good deal less agile even than Jane. I, a stripling, a mere lad, only yesterday a fine broth of a boy, shall soon have fifty winters under my belt. The evidence for my age is there. I look in the mirror and, like an actor in a long-running play, I know my lines; also my wrinkles, pouches, and circles. Recently, filling out a bureaucratic form, I was able to supply my birth date, height, weight, and eye color readily enough, but when asked the color of my hair I instinctively lifted my cap to let the clerk decide for herself on brown or gray. On a good day, when the light is right, I do not look a week over forty-eight, though where I live there are not that many good days. But enough of these little self-deceptions. I am fifty, and, realist that I am, I must now conclude that my life is at least a third over.

St. Augustine says that "we should not underestimate the significance of number, since in many passages of sacred scripture numbers have meaning for the conscientious interpreter." In my own life, I have paid little attention to the number of my years. The supposedly great decade markers—twenty, thirty, forty—whirred past, and I paid them no more heed than as a boy I did to the Burma-Shave signs along the highway: I noted them, smiled, and drove on. Owing perhaps to my having become a father fairly young—I had charge of four sons by the age of twenty-six—I was unable to linger overlong on the glories of youth, except in fantasy. I tended to be precocious in other, less important ways. Perhaps it was the era into which I was born, but I never looked upon youth as an occupation or religion or social class. It was instead something one enjoyed—if one was lucky—while passing through it.

"Act your age," mothers would say to their children when I was a boy. "Be a man," fathers would exhort their sons. "Aw, grow up," older sisters and teenage girlfriends would exclaim. In fact, growing up didn't seem like a bad idea. A goodly number of grown-ups walked the streets in those days. Think only of the movies. Edward G. Robinson, Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, James Cagney—these were men who appeared on screen in suits and ties, hats, black shoes. Grown-ups. Robert Redford, Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro, Harrison Ford—these are men who, at the same age as Robinson, Bogart & Co., one thinks of as characteristically in jeans, sneakers or boots, loose collars. Graduate students. One could make a similar comparison of actresses. Compare Bette Davis and Jane Fonda, Ingrid Bergman and Meryl Streep. All are fine actresses, but the former are women, the latter girls who continue to grow older. Nowadays there aren't so many grown-ups—just a lot of older dudes. It is, apparently, what the culture calls for just now. I happen to be writing this in a short-sleeve rugby shirt, chino pants, and tasseled loafers. I'm an older dude myself.

Just as I have never been able to think of Hugh Hefner as a playboy—he has always looked to me like an insurance salesman—so neither can I quite think of myself as an older dude, all physical evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. Not that I wish to remain forever young. Unlike Philip Larkin, who once declared that not having to get mixed up with children more than compensated for having to start earning a living, I rather enjoyed my childhood and adolescence. But enough

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was enough. Becoming grown-up, with its promise of freedom, was always more alluring to me than anything youth could promise. The allure was there when I was very young. At the age of seven, at most eight, I used to watch a man named Sid Carter play softball in my neighborhood, and he represented, at least for me, some of the promise of growing up. Sid Carter must have been only in his early twenties, but from the perspective of age seven or eight that was plenty old. A marvelous athlete, he could hit a softball from Farwell Beach in Chicago roughly to Bessarabia. Tall, slender, tanned, his sandy-colored hair brushed back, he was dapper even in softball duds. In street clothes he was never less than perfectly turned out; elegance and flair came naturally to him. He drove a cream-colored Plymouth convertible. I recall thinking that, when I grew up, I, too, would own a convertible.

I never have. I suppose I never shall. My eldest son does, though. Not long ago he traded in his car for a high-powered British sports car. He called to report this to me, with what I sensed was a slight trepidation in his voice lest his square old man think him frivolous. "Dear boy," I said, "I'm glad that you have a sports car. I want you to have all the things I never had: sports cars, a beautiful Chinese girlfriend, lots of foreign languages." If you sense some yearning here, you are probably correct. If you sense serious regret, you are mistaken. I shall muddle through all right if I never drive down the Pacific Highway, the top down on my Porsche, gently teasing the lovely Dai-yu in Persian. Yet growing older does remind one of all the things one is now unlikely to do, or have, or be. I believe I have come to grips with the distinct possibility that I will never be a United States senator, or own a horse in the Kentucky Derby, or write a novel as long and as good as Proust's. I can live with these deprivations. I don't want your pity.

What I would prefer is that you find a way to stop the clock from running. When one is young, one lives as if one had a thousand years to go. Once one hits fifty, as E. B. White, a considerable hypochondriac, once said, one feels one has about twenty minutes to live. One is humming the damn "September Song" all the time. In this morning's paper I read that Robert A. Comfort, one of the five men who robbed the Hotel Pierre in 1972, died at age fifty-three. Alexis de Tocqueville—Mr. T himself—was taken out of the game at the same age. Philip Larkin, a man who seemed to have had the gift of perpetual middle age, while in his fifties (he died at sixty-three) once remarked: "If you assume you're going to live to be seventy, seven decades, and think of each decade as a day of the week, starting with Sunday, then I'm on Friday afternoon now. Rather a shock, isn't it?" It is. It also forces one to place a whole new interpretation on the notion of T.G.I.F.

As I turn fifty, it occurs to me that, unlike Tocqueville or Robert A. Comfort, I shall never write a great book or take part in an adventure such as a three-million-dollar heist. Neither shall I slam dunk a basketball nor publish a translation of Horace. Some of these things are technically possible—the robbery and the Latin translation—but more and more unlikely. I recently met a man who all his life wished to fly a plane; at sixty-four, upon his retirement, he learned to do so; and now, nearing seventy, he is about to fly solo to Europe. Impressive. I should love to learn to play the harpsichord, and with the injection of large sums of money in lessons and even larger sums of time given over to practice, my guess is that I could learn to play "Clair de lune" with a proficiency that, should a person with good manners be listening to me, would doubtless bring on in him a hemorrhage owing to violently suppressed laughter. But I am certain not to attempt to learn to play the harpsichord. There are too many other items on my agenda that are more pressing. Reaching the age of fifty may not confer wisdom—that honorary degree is given to few and almost never at commencement time—but it does allow one to understand rather better the poet Joseph Brodsky's remark that "every choice is essentially a flight from freedom."

The fact is that I am a man on a schedule. Some people are and some people aren't on a schedule, and the people who aren't are probably luckier. Those people who are on a schedule—who plan to be millionaires by the age of thirty, publish ten books by the age of forty, or hold serious economic or political power by the age of fifty—always hear the clock ticking, feel the light breeze caused by the turning of calendar pages, sense footsteps (whose?) following them. My own schedule is far from clear, though in some loose way I

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have always kept one. Its chief purpose appears to be to convince me that I am, inevitably, a bit behind. In college, not long after I somewhat inchoately decided I should like to become a writer, I met a classmate who, at the age of sixteen, had already published a short story in *New World Writing*, a magazine with a paperback book format that included among its contributors Federico García Lorca, William Carlos Williams, and Ignazio Silone. Not yet out of the starting gate, I already felt myself several furlongs off the pace. Henceforth I carefully noted the birth dates of published writers younger than I, and, while I did not wish them ill, I did hope they would at least slow down a little.

My classmate who published a story in *New World Writing* at sixteen has not, so far as I know, published anything since. What happened to him? Having opened so grandly, did he then draw bad cards: a fatal illness, an automobile accident, alcoholism? Or did he instead forego life lived on a schedule? Did he come across the advice of Lambert Strether? In Henry James's *The Ambassadors*, Lambert Strether tells the character little Bilham, "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't matter so much what you do in particular, so long as you have your life." When issuing that sound advice, Strether was fifty-five, or five years older than I—and Henry James, when putting the advice in Strether's mouth, was himself fifty-eight. Good advice though it is, is it available to one who is on a schedule? The question is, of course, one that occurred to Henry James—what serious question didn't?—for James himself was on a schedule, piling up book after book, so that in later years he wondered if he had allowed himself to live as fully as he might have done. As Strether goes on to tell little Bilham, "Still, one has the illusion of freedom; therefore don't be, like me, without the memory of that illusion. I was either, at the right time, too stupid or too intelligent to have it; I don't quite know which. Of course, at present, I'm a case of reaction against the mistake; and the voice of reaction should, no doubt, always be taken with an allowance."

The only other American writer as good on the subject of middle age as Henry James is that great klutzy genius Theodore Dreiser. After Dreiser lost years of his writing life owing to a mental collapse and to regaining his confidence following the failure of *Sister Carrie*, he wrote like a man on a very strict schedule. Dreiser created the most powerful portraits of middle-aged men in American literature: Lester Kane in *Jennie Gerhardt*, Frank Cowperwood in the so-called *Trilogy of Desire*, and, most memorably, George Hurstwood in *Sister Carrie*. What is astonishing is that Dreiser created Hurstwood, the quintessence of the middle-aged man in crisis, while he, Dreiser, was still in his twenties. It was Dreiser who, in Hurstwood, depicted the mid-life crisis fully seventy years before it became a cliché in the thick-fingered hands of the popular psychologists, thus confirming Freud's famous statement that psychology has most to learn from the poets.

I am pleased to report that I myself have not yet had anything resembling a mid-life crisis, at least as such episodes are advertised in popular psychology, and I plan to go to my grave without one. (But, then, neither have I ever had a catharsis—a subject I shall perhaps one day write up for *Mademoiselle* or some other old-line women's magazine.) Merely because the label is there doesn't mean everyone has to paste it upon his forehead. Besides, with the span of life increasing, it is no longer quite so clear where mid-life is. *Life Begins at Forty* was the title of Walter B. Pitkin's best-seller of 1932, a book written in cheerful reaction to the then-prevailing notion that senescence first began to set in at forty. Nowadays it more often seems that not life but adulthood begins at forty—sometime between obtaining an MBA and acquiring a condominium. A great deal in contemporary culture permits one to indulge the delusion that one is still youthful well into one's thirties and even one's forties.

The moment of truth will arrive. However young one may feel, one is no longer young when in the eyes of the young one is not young. Somerset Maugham tells, in *A Writer's Notebook*, that the moment of truth came for him when, one day in his early forties, he got into a cab with a woman and her niece, and the niece took the strapontin, or tip seat, leaving the more comfortable seats for her aunt and him. (If you can recall tip seats in cabs, you are no longer so young yourself, darling.) A bachelor friend of mine noted that the moment of truth came for him when a younger woman he was out with suggested

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that they repair to a bar that had "a really knock-out sound system." Another friend marked the moment when, after a day spent outdoors, he returned home to discover that, owing to thinning hair, the top of his head was sunburned. My own moment came when delivering a lecture on Theodore Dreiser to a class of college freshmen, I began by saying that "Dreiser was the first major American writer from the other side of the tracks." No sooner was the sentence out of my mouth than it occurred to me that my class could have no notion about what tracks I was talking about. I was thirty-seven, and obviously old well before my time.

My time was part of the problem. I was born in 1937, which means that in 1965 I was twenty-eight years old. I mention 1965 because that was the year that the era known—with chronological inexactitude—as the "sixties" got under way in earnest, with the prominence of the Free Speech Movement at the University of California in Berkeley. Virginia Woolf famously (and rather dubiously) declared that human nature changed in 1910; I am quite certain that human nature did not change in 1965 either, but one of the things that did begin to change in that year was the way people thought about age. Suddenly to be young was everything, and even not very young people became aggressively, even militantly, youthful. The ground for the apotheosis of youth was prepared by the election of John F. Kennedy and the orgy of publicity given our young president and his youthful staff. By the middle 1960s this apotheosis of youth had taken a rivalrous, slightly nasty turn. Old geezers among us will recall one of many slogans of the day: "Don't trust anyone over thirty."

I was not yet thirty, and hence technically trustworthy, but exceedingly ill-prepared to join the kiddie corps. I had a family and a well-paying job; I had, for crying out loud, a mortgage. Wearing my hair in the style of George Eliot or pulled back in a ponytail like Debbie Reynolds did not seem to be, as people said at the time, "my thing." I prefer to think that I had too much irony—and, I hope, iron—in my makeup to smoke pot with either a straight or a laughing face. I rather liked to wear a necktie; had I wished to wear bell-bottoms, I should have joined the Navy. Allen Ginsberg was not my idea of a serious writer, nor Timothy Leary of a clear thinker, nor Herbert Marcuse of a profound philosopher. The sixties, when you got right down to it, was not my idea of a nice time.

With the arrival of the sixties it was as if a curtain—I believe a man named Churchill has already used up the metaphor of an "iron curtain"—had descended that divided the young from those who chose not to be young. Age had less to do with it than temperament and condition: John Lennon, the head Beatle, for example, was only three years younger than I and a year or two older than George Will, the conservative columnist and a grown-up. Natural predilections of temperament put me on the side of the not-young—E. T. A. Hoffmann, not Abbie Hoffman, was my idea of a hero—but, temperament aside, having a family clinched it. Experiments with high-powered drugs of the kind that went on in the sixties may have been interesting, but psychological interest was not the first thing to come to mind when I learned that a friend of my adolescent stepson had killed himself with an overdose of LSD. The sexual freedom of the sixties was also enticing, but, such are the limitations of human nature, it, too, did not come without cost. If I found myself on the not-young side of the curtain, others my age and older chose the young side, and many of them have remained there, living out their days as post-hippie Dorian Grays.

At fifty you can no longer claim that you are young, the way you might, say, at forty-five, and get away with it. At fifty, however young, even immature, you may feel, you have to begin regarding yourself as middle-aged, early middle-aged, if that adjective makes you feel any better, but middle-aged nonetheless. At fifty you can look much younger than you are, if that is important to you (and if it was not important to lots of people, health clubs and plastic surgeons would be out of business). At fifty you can, with training, run a marathon, play serious tennis, swim the English Channel. At fifty, again with training, you can have a lover of twenty-four. (I once knew a man in his early fifties who was married to a woman of twenty-three, but this same man also kept a mistress of forty-five. When I remarked on this unusual reversal of procedure, and asked him why, with so young a wife, he needed an older mistress, he put out his hands, palms to the heavens, and replied that he had to have

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someone to talk to.) At fifty you can still be in pretty good shape—*for fifty.*

Middle-aged—the English language contains jollier words, surely. Middle-aged has something of the ring of the end of the party about it. It suggests loss of hair and gains in flesh, stiffening of joints and loosening of teeth; it suggests a dimming of vision and memory, of physical and mental powers generally. It is a Bosporus, a Golden Horn, of the life span, where not east and west but age and youth meet; and like Istanbul, the city on the banks of the Bosporus, middle age can be filled with not always charming surprises: you make it through fewer and fewer nights without arising to inspect the plumbing; in winter the hair departs your shins; the clerk at the hardware store, with irony you could live without, refers to you as "young feller"; you cannot remember what you had for dinner on Tuesday, but you can remember the lyrics to Vaughan Monroe's hit songs. You don't recall having booked passage, but you seem to be, very slowly, sailing to Byzantium, which, as Yeats seems to imply, is the country of timelessness.

On the positive side, at fifty, if life has been kind, leaving you with no serious illnesses or permanent disappointments, you begin to get the feeling that you are playing, as the sports announcers say, "in control." You see more going on around you. Setbacks are easier to take; victories are no less pleasant, but you know that the sweet taste they bring does not last long. Baggier and saggier though your skin may grow, you feel more comfortable in it. Things that used to outrage you can now sometimes amuse you. You do not expect so much from other people, or from yourself. You care less about what other people think of you. This last point is similar to one made by Somerset Maugham, who was always a rigorous registrar of his own age. In *A Writer's Notebook* Maugham wrote: "That is what makes youth unhappy, the vehement anxiety to be like other people, and that is what makes middle age tolerable, the reconciliation with oneself." I hesitate to use the word, lest I be thought to be claiming it for myself, but middle age does sometimes give one the faintest suggestion that one may be acquiring "perspective."

Yet is it perspective that explains what I can only describe as my loss of awe for the living? When I was younger, it seemed that giants walked the earth: Churchill, Gandhi, de Gaulle in politics; Matisse, Stravinsky, Thomas Mann in art; Einstein, Fermi, Planck in science. The last figure for whom I felt a similar reverence was George Balanchine. The only living figure for whom I feel anything approaching such regard is Solzhenitsyn. Still, I wonder: Have I grown larger, smarter, surer in my perspective, or have men and women grown smaller in some indefinable way? I continue to respect what I take to be solid achievement in art and scholarship, but age has brought with it a loss of the capacity for adulation.

It was Evelyn Waugh who, having submitted himself to a painful and less than altogether necessary operation for hemorrhoids, claimed that his motive for doing so was perfectionism. I cannot claim to have had any serious standing as a perfectionist, but, now at middle age, any tendency in that direction has departed (gone perhaps to the same place to which the hair on my shins departs in winter). I am also through with self-improvement programs, even though I note around my apartment the presence of a plastic jump rope, two ten-pound barbells, and racquetball equipment—all there to testify to my hopes for one day getting into shape. What shape! At fifty, I suppose an oval is most likely. Intellectual self-improvement programs, too, are over for me. All I wish now is to become a little less stupid in the years left and to become more than a little better at my craft. As people close to me will tell you, I was never much good at self-improvement anyway.

From the perspective of fifty, I can now see that I have been extremely lucky. Lucky not to have been seriously ill, lucky to have been born in an interesting and free country, lucky even in my generation. Mine has been a generation that has missed having to go to war, which, in the present century, is like having lived out of doors in the rain and somehow avoided getting wet. My generation was much too young for World War II, still too young for Korea, and then too old for Vietnam. Having come of age in the United States in the 1950s, we missed the excitement of generations that came of age before ours—excitement, however, that carried certain penalties with it. The twenties, for example, when Prohibition was in force, produced an inordi-

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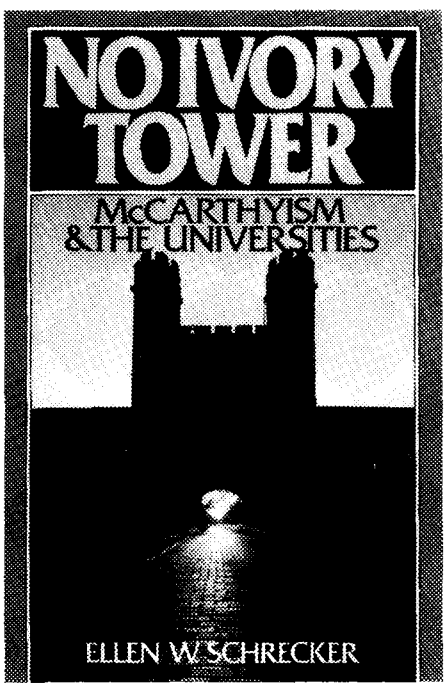

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nately large number of alcoholics, largely because, as a man of that generation once explained it to me, drinking was inseparable from the idea of the illicit, and hence inseparable, too, from excitement. The thirties, with its crunching Depression, left a great many people hostage to anxiety over money all their lives, while a great many other people lapsed into the swamp of sectarian politics, from which they, too, never quite re-emerged. To have come of age in the forties was to have one's maturity marked indelibly by World War II. But to have come of age in the fifties was to miss being swamped by public events, to be a little out of it, and to be a little out of it was not a bad place to be. To be absolutely in it, to be altogether with-it, brought its own disadvantages, not least among them the loss of perspective (Must remember to supply the antecedents for all those *its* at a later date.)

Tolstoy had no problem with the antecedent for *it*. In "The Death of Ivan Ilych," *it* is death, impure and unsimple. "It alone was true," Tolstoy has Ivan Ilych reflect. "Face to face with *It*," Tolstoy later writes. "And nothing to be done with *It*. Only look and shudder." I recently reread Tolstoy's terrifying story, and not the least terrifying thing about it, to someone who is about to turn fifty, is that poor Ivan Ilych, in the story, is only forty-five. And "the thought had suddenly come into his head: 'What if in reality my whole life has been wrong?'" Ivan Ilych's whole life, as Tolstoy leaves no doubt, has indeed been wrong, wasted on the inessential and the irrelevant, which is what makes his death so bitter. The power of Tolstoy's story is of course in making every reader above a certain age—forty, let us say—ask that same question of his own life: "What if in reality my whole life has been wrong?"

There really is no way around asking that question, though there are endless ways of providing elusive answers to it. I do not so much ask the question of myself directly as consider it indirectly through the yearning to change my life, or at least my work, which comes upon me periodically. A few years ago, for example, I felt a powerful urge to drop all intellectual work—to continue reading, to continue writing (though much less than I now do), but to take a job that would put me more in the stream of daily life. One day I confided this to a graduate student, who, I rather insensitively failed to consider, longed to do exactly the kind of work I was contemplating leaving. "My God," she said, "if you are not happy, I may just commit suicide." I tried to explain, but am fairly certain that I did not succeed. You live, an old saying has it, and you learn. You live, I myself find, and you yearn.

If you are anything like me, you yearn above all to go on living. Unlike Ponce de León, I have never searched for the fountain of youth, but I should be heartily pleased if I could find a way to freeze time. Unlike, too, Mr. John McSorley, the founder of McSorley's Old Ale House (written about so splendidly by Joseph Mitchell), who, upon ceasing to drink at age fifty-five, was supposed to have announced, "I've had my share," I feel nothing of the kind about life. "If you're fifty-five and retired," runs the beginning of a commercial for an insurance company, and every time I hear it I think, "Wait a minute, I am fifty and have only begun." It's a fine age, fifty, an age when one begins to feel a certain ease in the world and mastery over one's environment, and I should like to remain at fifty for another twenty or thirty years. Somehow I have the sense that this will not be permitted.

At fifty one begins to be comfortable with oneself, but the more comfortable one feels, the more uncomfortably one feels time running out. The minutes, the hours, the days go as slowly as ever; it is those damn weeks, months, and years that now speed past. While I remain as youthful and beautiful as always, why, I cannot help ask, have so many of my contemporaries grown to look so old? It feels as if I have just arrived at the table, and they are already bringing out dessert; I have just stepped out onto the dance floor, and the band is getting ready to play "The Party's Over." Hold the waiters! Stop the music! I like it here. I don't want to leave.

And yet am I ready to do everything possible to stay? It is not always easy to distinguish between the love of life and the fear of death. ("It" again.) Nor are love of life and greed for it quite the same thing. I have acquaintances who—out of a love of life? a fear of death?—are slowly but rather systematically eliminating life's little physical pleasures: cutting out tobacco, alcohol, caffeine, red meat, cholesterol-laden food, all sugar. Soon their meals

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will be reduced to three dandelions and a nice cup of boiled water. These same people also generally torture themselves with exercise. (I like very much the saying that jogging extends one's life—but only by exactly the amount of time that one spends jogging.) Why do I find all this mildly upsetting, if not slightly obscene? It strikes me as greed for life, as opposed to love of life; it is a demonstration of people whose greed makes them willing to do anything for duration; and greed, even for good things, is not very pretty.

When I think of the distinction between the love of life and the greed for duration, I think of the writer A. J. Liebling. With the aid of his fork, Liebling had early joined the ranks of the obese, an army he was never to leave. Like many of the Frenchmen he knew of the generation before World War I—"the heroic age" of dining, he called it—Liebling never developed "the ulcers that come from worrying about a balanced diet." He did what he wanted to do; went where he wanted to go; wrote extremely well on those subjects he wished to write about; and lived with the throttle full-out—though a more appropriate metaphor would be with "the plate always heaped up." Doubtless he would have lived longer had he lived more carefully. But had he lived more carefully—eaten less, drunk less—he would not have been A. J. Liebling. He had his fill and enjoyed the show, paying the check and leaving the table in his sixtieth year. Between the dandelion-and-boiled-water set and A. J. Liebling, a compromise position is possible. My own preference would be to live like Liebling and last until age ninety-seven. There is a contradiction here, I realize, but then, fortunately, the law of contradiction is not enforced, lest the jails overflow.

I can't supply a drumroll to go with this cliché, but the fact is that we human beings are the only species born with the painful foreknowledge of our death. Should this foreknowledge slip our minds, age is there as a perpetual crib, or pony, to remind us that life itself is a terminal illness. That at any rate is one way of looking at it. Another is to disregard age, as did Johnny Nikanov, a.k.a. King Cockeye Johnny, the gypsy who also appears in Joseph Mitchell's *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon* and who, when asked about his age, answered, "Between forty-five and seventy-five, somewhere in there. My hair's been white for years and years, and I got seventeen grandchildren, and I bet I'm an old, old man." There is something immensely appealing about that—about, more specifically, living outside age.

Most of us, I suspect, live our lives between these two possibilities, recalling that life is a terminal illness while at the same time forgetting our age. Our age seems incidental, something that has happened to us that we hadn't a great deal to do with, or that happened while we weren't looking. Sometimes our age frankly astonishes us; it is as if it were a strange country we suddenly find ourselves in. Fifty, one says. How the devil did I get here? If one thinks of age as a phonograph record, for many people the needle of their spirit seems to have stuck well before their actual age. I know a woman in her eighties who carries herself as if she were, tops, thirty-four. Despite the depredations of time and the ravages of illness, she is still, somehow, in spirit, sexy. I knew a man in his seventies in whom the mischievous eyes of a boy of eleven shone. My problem, if problem it be, is that I am and feel and look—precisely fifty.

As ages go, and as long as one has to have some age, I am rather fond of fifty. It has a nice middling sound to it. It qualifies for the French phrase *d'un certain âge*, which I render, idiomatically, as "not so young." Yet neither is it all that old. It is roughly two-thirds up the mountain, not a bad place to view those thirty years below as well as those thirty or more years above. Fifty is an age old enough for one to have suffered serious disappointments, yet young enough not to be completely out of hope. Proust, who died at age fifty-one, wished to recapture time, and came as close in his great novel as anyone is likely to get; I, at fifty, will settle for allowing time to continue to run. "Miles to go before I sleep," the poet wrote, and I hope his words apply to me. Even now I am planning on being a colorful elderly dude, filled with rich and dubious stories. Should I achieve eighty years, I just may claim to have played ball with Jackie Robinson, to have danced for Diaghilev, to have been Anton Chekhov's gin rummy partner. At that time, feel free to call me a liar, an outrageous old codger, even gaga. But call me a senior citizen and you had better carry dental insurance.

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Blue Jay

PAUL LAKE

A sound like a rusty pump beneath our window
Woke us at dawn. Drawing the curtains back,
We saw—through the milky light, above the doghouse—
A blue jay lecturing a neighbor's cat
So fiercely that, at first, it seemed to wonder
When birds forgot the diplomacy of flight
And met, instead, each charge with a wild swoop,
Metallic cry, and angry thrust of beak.

Later, we found the reason. Near the fence
Among the flowerless stalks of daffodils,
A weak piping of feathers. Too late now to go back
To nest again among the sheltering leaves.
And so, harrying the dog, routing the cat,
And taking sole possession of the yard,
The mother swooped all morning.

I found her there
Still fluttering round my head, still scattering
The troops of blackbirds, head cocked toward my car
As if it were some lurid animal,
When I returned from work. Still keeping faith.
As if what I had found by afternoon
Silent and still and hidden in tall grass,
Might rise again above the fallen world;
As if the dead were not past mothering.

✪ PAUL LAKE's poems have appeared in the *New Republic*, *Inquiry*, and other magazines. His first collection of poems, *Another Kind of Travel*, is forthcoming.

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The Curious Monsieur Cyon

GEORGE F. KENNAN

ACROSS THE HISTORICAL RECORD of nineteenth-century Russian science there flits briefly, in the 1870s, the arresting figure of a young physiologist of startling brilliance and promise: coming suddenly from outside; his personal life very little known; almost devoid of friends; fascinating the local academic community with his skill as a surgeon and the dramatic effectiveness of his lectures; receiving, at one point, Russia's most distinguished chair of physiology; occupying for a few short months the center of the stage in the world of Russian medical and physiological science; then vacating his chair and abandoning the Russian scene as abruptly as he had entered it, to be remembered (as a scientist) primarily only in the minds and memoirs of certain of those more serious students (and outstandingly, the young Pavlov) who had been exposed to his power as a teacher.

Across the French scene of the ensuing two decades, on the other hand, there moves quite a different figure: a shadowy one, this time, of inferior reputation, appearing in a whole series of guises: journalist, secret agent, publicist, propagandist for a Franco-Russian alliance and historian of the alliance that was ultimately concluded; living for some years in Paris, then in Switzerland; at times a French citizen, at times a Russian one (until deprived of both later by governmental action); finally dying in Paris in 1912 in poverty and neglect.

These were, of course, one and the same man, although the name was different in the two identities. And the strangeness of this career has aroused the curiosity of more than one scholar. What follows is an attempt to unravel as much as can be unraveled of this unusual, and in some respects tragic, life.

It may be useful to recall, by way of background to what follows, that the hero (or anti-hero) of Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*, Bazarov, was a medical student, fresh from the pursuit of his studies in Petersburg, and particularly interested in physiology. The story begins, it will be further recalled, with Bazarov's visit to the country home of a student friend. The latter presents Bazarov to his parents as a "nihilist," and explains to the bewildered parents just what that means. Bazarov spends

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most of his time in his room, cutting up frogs; and the room thus acquires, according to Turgenev, "a medical-surgical smell." Bazarov also becomes involved with another member of the host's family in bitter arguments over the merits, respectively, of German and Russian physiology, in which connection, incidentally, he declares the works of great artists, including Raphael, to be—since they are not scientific—worthless.

Turgenev's novel was published in 1862. It captured the interest and imagination of many people and entered prominently into the controversies then raging among the various factions—conservative, liberal, and radical—of the Russian intelligentsia. The figure of Bazarov, as well as the term *nihilist* attached to him (although Turgenev was not the first to use it), achieved through this book a legendary quality as a symbol of positivism, materialism, unfeeling secularism, and social-political radicalism.

All this may usefully be borne in mind as one considers the tale that follows.

I

On an inside street of the "Vyborg Side" of Petersburg's great Neva River there stood in 1873, as there had stood since the beginning of the nineteenth century and still stands today, the graceful and imposing building of what was then Petersburg's only medical school: the Imperial Medical-Surgical Academy. Because surgery had so often had its origins on the field of battle, it was not unnatural that this institution should have been a responsibility of the minister of war and have had a semi-military quality, receiving both military and civilian students. Situated as it was in the immediate neighborhood of the great military and naval hospitals of the Russian capital, it formed the heart of what might be called Russia's leading medical research center of the time—a place from which much of what was great in Russian medical and physiological science of the nineteenth century proceeded.

The Academy had acquired by the 1870s the reputation of being a hotbed of student radicalism. As recently as 1869 it had been racked by violent student disorders. Not for nothing had Turgenev suggested that his Bazarov was one of its students. Conservatives tended to attribute the tolerance of this radicalism by the authorities to the nefarious influence of the minister of war of the day: Dimitri Milyutin, the most liberal of the ministers of the Tsar Alexander II. Among other things, Milyutin had succeeded, in 1871, in bringing about the admission of women to the Academy. This, the first instance of women being admitted to higher education in Russia generally, was a revolutionary breakthrough. While

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it had been achieved only by the ruse that the women were there to study midwifery, not medicine, the ice was thus broken, and female students of that period were later permitted to complete medical studies and to become physicians. For many at court and in the bureaucracy, however, the mere fact of their admission stood as further proof of the dangerous radicalism of the Academy.

In a wider sense, this reputation was not wholly undeserved. The Academy did indeed serve as the inner sanctum for the spirit of scientific materialism that was then sweeping, like a religious hysteria, through the student youth and the professional intelligentsia of the day. This passionately held philosophy commonly expressed itself, as in Bazarov's case, in a contemptuous repudiation of the existing religious, political, and social establishments, which were seen as unscientific, hypocritical, and obscurantist, and in a determination to see those establishments swept away by revolution in the name of scientific socialism.

On the afternoon of January 21, 1873, the aula of this Medical-Surgical Academy was packed with a capacity crowd, made up of the administrative staff, student body, and faculty, plus a number of distinguished visitors, including the Minister of War. They had all assembled to hear the inaugural lecture of the most recent addition to the Academy's faculty: a twenty-nine-year-old physiologist, Russia's youngest professor and its first Jewish one, who went by the name of Ilya Fadeyevich Tsion.

Not surprisingly, it was no ordinary quality of intelligence and no ordinary academic career that had brought a man of this relatively tender age and this racial-religious background to the prestigious faculty of the Medical-Surgical Academy. Yet much of Tsion's life, both before and after this appearance at the Academy, remains shrouded in obscurity and can be reconstructed only uncertainly, from circumstantial rather than direct evidence.

He was born, it would appear, in 1842 or 1843, in a small community of the Lithuanian part of the Jewish Pale, near the town of Rassenai, not far from the German border. It was in this region, where the Jewish community was most exposed to the influence of its co-religionists in Germany, that the Jewish enlightenment movement of the period of Nicholas I found some of its strongest support.

Tsion's father has been referred to as an "artiste graveur"; and there is some evidence for the correctness of this version. From the content of the anonymous novel Tsion himself was to publish in France at a later date, we may also suspect that the question of the boy's education was the subject of painful conflict somewhere in the family entourage. The father (presumably) strongly favored the restriction of this education to the traditional local Jewish religious instruction of the village *cheder*

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and later, possibly, to the Talmudic studies of the *yeshiva*, with the thought that the boy should follow in his own footsteps as a superior handicraftsman. Somewhere in the entourage, however, there must have been a recognition of highly unusual intellectual abilities on the boy's part—abilities that deserved the sort of secular education that the locality could not provide—and there must, presumably, have been some pressure on the father to let his education proceed outside the confines of the local religious community. Eventually, though evidently not without crisis, the father's resistance (for this is what we must conclude it was) was overcome.

One might have thought that once this consent had been obtained in principle, the normal choice would have been to send the boy to one of the newly established state-sponsored Jewish schools in the larger cities, where Jewish religious instruction was mixed with other studies, starting with the Russian language, and where a professional assimilation into the Russian cultural world could be eased, if not assured. But for some reason a more radical decision was taken. Tsion was sent, at what appears to have been the unusually young age of nine or ten, to the purely Russian humanistic *gymnasium* at Chernigov, fully four hundred miles away. Jews were permitted to attend these schools, at least within the confines of the Pale (as Chernigov was), but relatively few did; and why Tsion was sent there, so far from home and at so tender an age, is one of the enduring mysteries surrounding his life. In any case, this is what occurred. And it may be taken, I think, as evidence not only of Tsion's precocity but also as one of the first indications of a very considerable affluence somewhere in his background. For just his board and keep during the six years he spent at the *gymnasium* must have cost money; yet neither here nor in the case of his many later years of higher study in Russia or abroad is there any suggestion of any financial pressure; on the contrary, there are hints of a very comfortable, even elegant, style of living.

Upon completion (1858) of six years of attendance at the *gymnasium*, Tsion proceeded directly to the study of medicine at the Medical-Surgical Academy in Warsaw. He was now sixteen or seventeen years old. He was to such an extent Russified by his years at the *gymnasium* that he appears to have been treated at the Academy in Warsaw as a Russian, and accordingly ostracized by the Polish students there. It was largely owing to this, one is told, that he transferred, the following year, to the medical faculty of the University of Kiev. Three years later (1862) he moved to the University of Berlin, where he completed his medical studies with a doctorate in Medicine and Surgery. He then went to Petersburg, where he did one year as a student at the Medical-Surgical Academy of that city (not to be confused with the Warsaw one),

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and obtained there, too, in 1865, the doctorate in medicine.

By this time, his abilities seem to have been well recognized by the Russian educational authorities; for at this point he was sent by the ministry of education to Paris to pursue what must now have been considered to be his researches (rather than studies) in the field of physiology. Where he did this is obscure—probably under the auspices of the great French physiologist, Claude Bernard, of whom he seems to have been a protégé and to whom he was to retain an enduring devotion. He remained in Paris for some years. In 1868 he received from the French Academy of Sciences one of the prestigious Montiou prizes (the Grand Prix de Physiologie expérimentale); and, two years later, he was given the gold medal of the Academy for work on the application of electricity to physiology. From Paris, he went back to Germany, where he was associated for a time with the well-known Leipzig physiologist, Carl Ludwig, and even published, together with Ludwig, a joint work on the so-called depressor-nerve of the heart, sometimes thenceforth referred to, in France at least, as "le nerf de Ludwig-Cyon."

Around the year 1867 Tsion returned to Petersburg. He was now a well-known and, in Western Europe at least, distinguished figure in his chosen field of science; and the Russian educational authorities were unable to ignore this distinction. In 1868 he became the Director of the Physiological Laboratory at the University of St. Petersburg, and began, although as yet without the title of professor, to lecture at that institution. Two years later he became the University's first, albeit "unestablished," professor of anatomy. By all evidence a brilliant lecturer, he was the first in Russia to combine lectures on anatomy with vivisectional demonstration, using animals and presumably corpses. He appears to have been endowed (possibly as an inheritance from his "artiste-graveur" father) with a phenomenal manual dexterity. The success of his lectures in Petersburg was legendary. Among his appreciative students was the young Ivan Pavlov, who in later years never failed to acknowledge his great debt to Tsion as a teacher.

Few eyewitness tales of these lectures have survived; but those that have are colorful. One of these tells of Tsion arriving for an evening surgical demonstration at the hospital on his way to a ball, attired in evening dress; of his performing the operation swiftly and faultlessly without even removing the white gloves; then tipping his top hat to the gaping students and proceeding on his way to his social engagement.

A second glimpse of Tsion's activity of that time, more earthy and probably more reliable than the other, comes from the classroom janitor at the Academy, an illiterate former peasant-soldier. He, too, was fascinated by Tsion's lectures. He never failed to attend them; and he recalled them in later years with admiration and enthusiasm. Tsion's

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predecessor, Sechenov, he would say, had been all right in his way, but all Sechenov had brought with him were a few frogs. Now Tsion—that was a different thing. "Before the lecture, he would surround the platform with an assemblage of dogs and rabbits, and sometimes even geese. And before he had finished, [this admiringly] not one of the creatures was alive. He had carved them all up."

In 1872, two years after Tsion assumed his special professorship at the University, the professor of physiology at the nearby Medical-Surgical Academy, the well-known Ivan Mikhailovich Sechenov, announced his intention of leaving the Academy to take up a position in Odessa; and he evidently recommended Tsion as his successor. The recommendation met with strong opposition on the part of the majority of the faculty. The opposition centered in what was called the "Russian" faction, as opposed to "German" (presumably largely German-Balt) minority, which favored the appointment. The question touched off one of those lively and excited conflicts to which faculties the world over seem to be prone, the upshot being that the nomination was voted down. But the arguments of the faculty majority for this action were of such absurdity in the light of Tsion's record and his obvious academic qualifications that the Minister of War, Milyutin, declined to accept them; and the Director of the Academy, on the Minister's orders, reversed the decision and appointed Tsion over the heads of the faculty majority. Tsion (unwisely, no doubt) accepted the appointment.

This is probably the point at which the reader should be informed of two of Tsion's personal qualities, both of which were henceforth to play an important part in the ups and downs of his curious career.

First of all, he was by now a strong and confirmed reactionary—not so much in the political sense (for there was scarcely such a thing as "politics" in the Russian autocracy of that day) but rather as regards his attitude to the philosophical issues racking the Russian society of the time. Primarily, these were the differences between a religious-conservative outlook, on the one hand, and a secular-liberal positivism on the other—the latter outlook being sharply divided between those who sought the realization of their ideals on the path of gradual and peaceful reform and those who preferred the path of terrorism and violent revolution. Tsion's views, by the time he came to his Petersburg professorships, were firmly rooted in the conservative camp, and strongly opposed to both of the other tendencies.

This, for a Russian-Jewish intellectual of the 1870s, was something so unusual as to be almost unheard of; and the processes by which Tsion came to this *Weltanschauung* are another of the mysteries of his life. They were ones probably connected with his experience at the Russian *gymnasium,* his tendency to deny or trivialize his own Jewishness, his

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obvious desire to be seen and accepted as a Russian, and a very genuine aversion to purely materialistic thinking. But they must have gone deeper than that. He sheds little light on them in the few autobiographical passages of his works. He admits that in his student days he was, like everyone else, not lacking in liberal impulses. As a student in Berlin in the early 1860s, he had become fascinated with the views and personality of the German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle. He had, in his youthful exuberance, even become one of the founding members of Lassalle's *Deutsche Arbeiterverein.* But disillusionment set in when Lassalle came to Berlin and Tsion attended one of his beer-hall political meetings with German worker-members of his movement. Tsion was shocked by the poorly concealed boredom and distaste with which his idol endured this encounter with the proletariat. And when he went up, after the meeting, to congratulate Lassalle on the effectiveness of his speech, Lassalle set him back by replying: "Yes, if only the beer weren't so horrible and if these people didn't stink so."

One cannot suppose that this momentary brush with liberal socialism alone sufficed to turn Tsion into a lifelong conservative. There must have been other and deeper reasons as well. The fact remains that Tsion brought to his professorship at the Medical-Surgical Academy a set of philosophical outlooks far to the right of all but the most reactionary intellectual circles of the Russia of his time. He was to retain this orientation to the end of his life.

The second feature of Tsion's personality that must now be mentioned was his highly unfortunate character—a peculiarity that seems to have been less prominent in his earlier years than it was after his experience at the Academy, about to be mentioned.

For all his intellectual power and scientific distinction, Tsion was, by anyone's standards, a difficult personality: vain, suspicious, touchy, devious, secretive, and vindictive. Tolerance, warmth of character, sincerity, humor, easygoing sociability—these were not for him. His hatreds and resentments, like his personal feuds and public polemics, were many and enduring; his friendships, if such could be said to exist, were few and fleeting. Misfortune dogged him, to be sure, throughout his life; but no one will ever know how much of it might have been avoided by a gentler and more balanced understanding on his part for the remainder of humankind. One suspects, here, the presence not only of deep psychic scars from some sort of earlier experience but also of a painful imbalance between intellectual precocity and emotional maturity. One of those who, in his memoirs, mentioned Tsion said that Tsion's face betrayed, along with its intellectual ferocity, a certain "helplessness." One can well believe it, and believing it, one can recognize that it was probably beyond his power to be much different

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from what he actually was. His helpless ineffectiveness in all personal and political affairs was as striking as his formidable scientific ability.

This brings us back, then, to January 21, 1873, the day of Tsion's inaugural lecture in the aula of the Medical-Surgical Academy. His appearance on that podium—a small figure, resplendent in the military uniform of the faculty of the Academy with all its gold braid and epaulets, the face framed by the bushy sideburns of the period—must have been, for him, the high moment of his life. Here he was, at the age of thirty or thirty-one, for the first time a regular professor (*ordinarius*) at Russia's most prestigious center of medical and physiological studies, addressing an audience that included not only the cream of academic distinction in his chosen field but high dignitaries of the Russian government as well. Yet he should have known, if he did not, that this audience was in some respects loaded against him. As already noted, the Academy was a hotbed of political radicalism, whereas he was a conservative. The faculty majority, still smarting from the rejection of its decision, sat (we may surmise) in stony-faced hostility and skepticism. A portion of the male student body was decidedly unprepared to hear or accept certain of the views Tsion was about to put forward. Only the girls, fully as radical as the boys in their political opinions but conscious of their responsibility as the cutting edge of feminism in Russian higher education and unwilling to jeopardize this function by public demonstrations, sat in demure impassivity, their faces composed into that bright innocence that comes so easily to young ladies of that age.

The lecture (a copy of which, in pamphlet form, still resides peacefully in the remarkable holdings of the New York Public Library) was a brilliant one. It consisted mostly of a lucid and absorbing description of the nerves of the heart: where they originated, what their function was, how they affected the organ in question. The heart, he pointed out, differed from most other human muscular organs in that it was not responsive to the conscious will of the individual in whom it was embedded. On the other hand, it was extremely sensitive to subconscious emotional impulses. This had been marvelously well recognized by the poets; the terms in which they had described these reactions ("my heart stood still," or "my heart leaped up," for example) were extraordinarily accurate in the physiological sense. And because these reactions were unintended and uncontrollable, they were unfailingly revealing. If, for example, you had a criminal before the bar of justice and you tied a cardiograph to his heart, the judge would be able to tell, from the cardiograph's reactions, when he was, and when he was not, telling the truth. (This was, curiously enough, almost precisely a century before the lie detector was actually invented.)

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One may suppose that the lecture, thus far, was accepted without remonstrance by Tsion's listeners. But he then proceeded to fire at his listeners a cannon shot of startling boldness. All this, he reiterated, was observable, scientifically. But what was *not* observable—what could not be scientifically observed or explained—was what originally activated the nerve and caused these physiological reactions in the first place. Why? Because there was, in the psychic makeup of the human animal, something—let it be called the soul—that was beyond the reach of science and that was simply unknowable in scientific terms. Tsion said:

> Between the knowledge of the mechanical processes that occur in thought and the understanding of the way in which these processes actually form the thought, there lies an entire great chasm that human intelligence will never be able to bridge. . . . The impossibility of understanding this connection is just as great with relation to the thoughts of a Newton as it is with relation to the creative imagination of a Shakespeare or a Rafael. . . . The recreation of the mechanism of the thought process is the final limit of possibility beyond which none of the natural sciences nor of any other science will ever be able to go in the study of the life of the human spirit.

It is not easy, in this more sophisticated age, to understand the violence of the offense such words as these brought to a large part of Tsion's audience. This was, as noted above, the golden age of belief in the endless powers of natural science—in its capability of providing the answers to all problems, personal and social, of the human predicament. This belief had attained the emotional intensity of a religious faith. The Medical-Surgical Academy was the high temple of that faith. And here was Tsion, placing limitations on the powers of science, implying the existence of something called the soul as distinct from, and supplementary to, indeed essential to, the body, and claiming that this entity, the soul, was beyond the reach of natural science. In the face of such assertions, what became of the entire structure of one's belief in the ultimate illuminative and redemptive capacities of science? What, indeed, was this heresy which suggested that there might even be some substance in the despised religious tenets (for many of these students, like Turgenev's Bazarov, were the rebellious children of priests) of one's parents? Were these not the utterances of a species of intellectual "anti-Christ," undermining the very foundations of the temples of science, opening the world to a relativistic chaos in which there could never be anything solid for anyone, ever, to hold on to?

During the final passages of the lecture, there had been an audible rumble of indignation on the student benches, rising to a crescendo of hissing as the lecturer completed the passages just quoted. Tsion commented bitterly on this to the Minister of War, as they left the hall.

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"Mr. Minister," he said, "did you notice the impression created upon a portion of the student body by certain parts of my lecture? So far as I am concerned, I am deeply embittered. I am no prophet, but I predict that if you do not put an early end to the demoralization of this student youth by drastically changing the system of instruction, Russia will be, within the space of fifteen to twenty years, in a state of total social disintegration."

"You exaggerate," replied Milyutin, "because you have no faith in the moral power of the natural sciences."

"Yes," replied Tsion, "no faith at all."

("And I was not wrong," reflected Tsion, recalling this incident many years later. "Do you want to know what became of those young nihilists who protested against my doctrines? There were hundreds of them; and out of that number at least seventy were either hung or sent to Siberia.")

With the conclusion of this inaugural lecture, the fat was fairly in the fire. The students, supported by a portion of the faculty, were up in arms. When Tsion began his regular lecturing, he encountered aroused and hostile audiences. Thinking that he had perhaps been too cryptic in what he had said in the inaugural lecture, he expanded on his views in a paper that he prepared as a pamphlet and attempted to distribute from the lecture platform. The students roared in anger and threw the pamphlets back in his face. He then further enraged them by disparaging the scientific achievements and capacities of his predecessor, Sechenov, who was a favorite of the students. (The attacks on Sechenov came with peculiar ill-grace on Tsion's part, because it was actually the latter who had initiated his nomination for a faculty appointment.) And to all this insult he added the injury of flunking about half the sophomore class for neglecting their studies in favor of radical politics.

Student hostility soon grew into violence. Tsion found himself obliged to ask for the stationing of a military guard outside his laboratory to protect him from the students. The troubles continued, and grew. Finally, on October 17, 1874, less than two years after Tsion's entrance onto the faculty, student disorders broke out on a serious scale, inspired largely by, or at least centering around, the demand for his removal. They soon spread to other Petersburg institutions of higher learning, particularly the School of Mines and the Technological Institute. Within a week they had achieved such intensity that troops eventually had to be called out, and it became necessary to close several of the institutions, including the Academy, for long periods of time.

The situation had now become impossible. What exactly happened is obscure; but on October 28, 1874, after what one suspects to have been a sultry interview between Tsion and the director of the Academy, the termination of Tsion's lectures was announced, and he submitted to the

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Ministry of Education a request to be sent abroad on an official scholarly mission, to Leipzig, specifically, where he proposed to prepare and publish a work on the methodology of physiological research.

From this point on, the shadows of a deliberately created obscurity begin to envelop Tsion's life, lightening briefly only from time to time to afford fleeting glimpses of various disconnected—or seemingly disconnected—involvements, one more incongruous than the other. He certainly went abroad as proposed, perhaps initially to Leipzig, but then, for permanent residence, to Paris. He did indeed publish in 1876, in Petersburg (but with a German-language publishing house and in German), his work on the methodology of physiological experimentation.

At some point not long after Tsion's departure from Petersburg, there was set up an official commission, under the chairmanship of the brother of the Tsar, the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, to investigate the recent disorders at the Academy. The commission vindicated Tsion insofar as his conduct vis-à-vis the students and the institution was concerned. This widely publicized decision was then warmly and publicly supported by the great conservative editor Mikhail Katkov in his influential Moscow newspaper the *Moskovskiye Vyedomosti*. Tsion was never to lose his sense of indebtedness to both of these prominent conservative figures—the Grand Duke and Katkov—for their support.

The vindication appears to have been the stimulation for the conferring upon him in 1877, by order of the Tsar, the title of State Councilor, which made him officially a member of the gentry. But the commission's decision seems to have been coupled with a suggestion that it might thenceforth be better if Tsion's scientific and pedagogical talent were to find employment somewhere else than in Petersburg. There reposes, in any case, in the files of the Medical-Surgical Academy, a cryptic undated note signed by the Secretary of the Council of the University of St. Petersburg, to the effect that on October 24, 1875 (just one year after the blowup at the Academy), the Executive Director of the Ministry of Education had issued an order dismissing Tsion from the governmental service "pursuant to his request on grounds of illness." With this, Tsion's ties to the Russian academic world and to Russian society generally came to an end. He was never to resume residence in that country.

II

From that point on, it is a different story. The place of residence is now, and will be for the next fifteen years, Paris. The individual with whom we have to deal is no longer the Ilya Fadeyevich Tsion, preco-

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cious child of the Jewish Pale. It is one Élie de Cyon, a well-heeled and cosmopolitan gentleman, installed in a fine apartment in the rue de la Bienfaisance, from which he writes his letters on elegant letterhead stationery. He speaks and writes, on all evidence, flawless French and German. Russia, for the time being, is behind him.

In the first year of his residence in Paris, Cyon continued his scientific work under the patronage of Claude Bernard, who encouraged him to hope for a professorship—presumably at the Sorbonne. With this in mind, he took a French doctorate (his third earned one) and pursued researches in the laboratory of another prominent physiologist, Paul Bert. This last proved to be an unfortunate arrangement. Acquaintance with the laboratory and with Bert's work left Cyon with nothing but contempt for the latter's scientific ability; whereas Bert's views and activities outside the scientific field were simply anathema in Cyon's eyes. For Bert, aside from being an impassioned positivist, was more the politician than the scientist. A Left-Republican parliamentarian, he was shortly to become Minister of Education in Léon Gambetta's "grand ministère," where he would lead the fight for the closing of the church schools and the complete secularization of education. No undertaking could have been more odious in Cyon's eyes than this one. Not surprisingly, the two men quarreled; and when, in early 1878, there occurred, with the death of Claude Bernard, another of those disasters that seem so often to have dogged Cyon's path, Bert's influence, now supreme among that of French physiologists, was exerted to assure that no French professorship was forthcoming for Cyon.

This last, it appears, was too much. All openings were now barred. Return to the Petersburg professorship was impossible. In Germany professorships were governmental appointments and would scarcely go to a foreigner and a Jew, however distinguished. And now—this cold shoulder from the official French scientific community. Frustrated and embittered, Cyon abandoned science and turned to other things.

For the ensuing twenty years—all years of residence in Paris or in Switzerland—there would be a profusion of non-scientific involvements. Of these involvements, given Cyon's congenital secretiveness and the paucity of the historical record, we have only scattered and confusing, if often tantalizing, bits of evidence. Here are only a few of the high spots.

The reader will recall that it was the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich who had chaired the commission that investigated the disorders at the Medical-Surgical Academy and vindicated Cyon in his part in the affair. The Grand Duke had gone on, not long thereafter, to command the Russian forces in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. At the end of 1879, fresh from—and exhausted by—this arduous and frustrating military experience, he came to Paris to seek the restoration

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of his shattered health. Like many another such commander in chief, he came in a state of violent embitterment against the government on whose behalf he had fought, blaming it, not himself, for the reverses and frustrations he had been obliged to endure on the field of battle. Senior French officers, having always in mind the possibility of an eventual alliance with Russia, now invited the Grand Duke to be the guest of the French army on a series of visits to French military installations over the winter of 1879–80. Cyon, mindful of the debt he owed to this eminent personality, attached himself to the Grand Duke's suite as a physician, and accompanied him on these various visits.

It was, presumably, in the course of these travels that Cyon formed connections of some sort with at least one senior French military figure—connections that were to have much to do with his activities of the ensuing years on behalf of a Franco-Russian alliance. This figure was General Félix Gustave Saussier—a professional soldier who had commanded forces in combat in several parts of the world in earlier years and who was later to become, for many more years, military commandant of Paris and supreme commander-designate for all the French forces in the event of war. Saussier, like a number of other French commanders, was (after the Franco-Prussian War) implacably anti-German; and he was notorious for his devotion to the cause of a Franco-Russian alliance. His relationship to Cyon appears to have been a close one, at least in the political sense, and to have endured and to have had significant consequences in later years.

The Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich had brought with him, on this visit to France, the confidential official diary of his general staff in the recent Turkish war. This was a document of great political delicacy; for the grievances it brought forward were ones directed largely against the Grand Duke's brother, the Tsar Alexander II, and in part against the future Tsar Alexander III, then still Crown Prince. Towards the latter, in particular, who had commanded a division in the recent campaign, the Grand Duke's feelings were not exactly ones of familial affection.

In the course of their travels around the French military bases, the Grand Duke showed this diary to Cyon, and either ordered him or authorized him to arrange for the publication of the gist of it, in anonymous form, in Paris. In addition to this, upon completion of his visit to France, the Grand Duke left a copy of the diary itself in Cyon's custody, with orders that it was not to be published until three years after his own death and not to be revealed to anyone before that time. This arrangement was to have consequences, to be noted below, when the time limit expired.

Pursuant to the Grand Duke's wishes, Cyon drew up an anonymous

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article based on the diary, and took it to the well-known publisher and editor of the magazine known as *La Nouvelle Revue* (a competitor of the *Revue de deux Mondes*)—Madame Juliette Adam. A woman of boundless energy and temperament—a fiery chauvinist who lived primarily for her hatred of Germany and of Bismarck personally (whom she never met) and devoted most of her long life to the cause of French *revanche*—Juliette Adam was a strong partisan of the recently established Republican regime. She conducted for many years her own *républicain* salon, in competition with those of the great aristocratic hostesses of the French capital. She accepted and published Cyon's anonymous article (much to the fury of the Tsar and the Crown Prince, who instantly recognized its provenance when it came to their attention). Whether Cyon had known Juliette Adam before is not clear; but from this time on, in any case, his connection with her—a relationship more political than personal—was also to have an important place in his Paris life.

Not long after the Grand Duke's departure, in the early 1880s, Cyon became for one or two years the editor of a Bonapartiste periodical, *Le Gaulois*—a daily newspaper founded some years earlier with the help of Russian money and strongly committed to the idea of a Franco-Russian alliance. Here, too, characteristically, Cyon's involvement seems to have been a stormy one, and did not long endure.

In the meantime, however, Cyon functioned from time to time as a scientific and occasionally political correspondent for Katkov's *Moskovskiye Vyedomosti*. In 1884 he paid a visit to Moscow to thank the great editor for the support the latter had given in connection with his troubles at the Medical-Surgical Academy. This was the beginning of a close attachment between the two men. They obviously discussed on that occasion the prospects for a Franco-Russian alliance, of which Cyon claimed already to be a protaganist. Katkov, who as a Monarchist-conservative had previously supported the close Russian tie to the royal house of Prussia, was not yet ready to go this far. But some two years later, under the influence of certain complications in the Balkans which he mistook for the results of German and Austrian intrigues against Russia, Katkov was brought to change his mind and to launch himself into that campaign for a Franco-Russian alliance which was to become his obsessive preoccupation over the year that was about to ensue before his own death.

During these final months of Katkov's life (from the summer of 1886 to that of 1887) Cyon's involvement, through Katkov, with Franco-Russian relations was, as always, somewhat mysterious but obviously intensive. He persuaded Madame Adam to hand over to him for that year, at least nominally, the directorship of her *Nouvelle Revue*. There is no evidence that he actually took any part in this running of the

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magazine; but it is clear that the appointment had something to do with his desire to be useful at the French end to the campaign Katkov was conducting in Russia.

The winter of 1886–87 witnessed the development of the Franco-German "war scare" of 1887—one of those hysterical and wholly unjustified outbursts of alarm that, under the influence of a sensational European press, periodically took possession of portions of the European public during those final decades of the last century. In February 1887, in the midst of this fever, Cyon paid another mysterious visit to Russia, remaining there, this time, for several weeks. He was probably bearing with him, upon his arrival, a message from someone in high position in France to military circles in Petersburg. He certainly spent days on end in agitated consultation with Katkov and with senior people in the immediate entourage of the Tsar, all with a view to promoting the earliest possible conclusion of a Franco-Russian military alliance. Among other things: certainly with a view to making himself more acceptable in senior Russian officialdom, but perhaps also out of genuine conviction, he sought and received baptism as a Christian.

The war scare soon died away; and with Katkov's death on the first of August 1887, Cyon's involvement with all these agitations came to an end. Learning of the editor's final illness, Cyon hastened to the scene, partly out of sincere devotion to his influential friend but partly, too, by all indications, in the hopes of being appointed the latter's successor as editor of what was then considered the most influential of Russian newspapers. But it was characteristic of his experiences that he arrived too late for the funeral and missed out when the new editor was selected.

With Katkov's passing, Cyon's personal part in the campaign for a Franco-Russian alliance came to an abrupt end, as did that of the senior French commanders with whom he seems to have been in touch. From now on the efforts to achieve such an alliance would be carried forward much more quietly and skillfully through the French and Russian foreign offices, and general staffs, all of them entities which neither had nor wished to have any relations of confidence with Cyon. His involvement with this particular enterprise would consist, from now on, primarily in the preparation of a semi-autobiographical book on the Franco-Russian Alliance (*Histoire de l'entente franco-russe. 1886–1894. Documents et souvenirs*: Librarie Charles, 1895), in which he and Katkov not surprisingly appear as the pioneers and leading protagonists of that particular arrangement.

The next of Cyon's involvements consisted of his efforts to play a role in the long and celebrated series of French loans to Russia that were to extend over the years down to the First World War. Katkov, shortly before his death, had placed Cyon in contact with the Russian finance

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minister of the day, I. A. Vyshnegradski; and Cyon did indeed negotiate, with the bankers of Paris and Berlin, the first of these arrangements. The loan in question was a relatively small one, almost experimental in nature from the Russian standpoint, but nonetheless significant. Its aftermath, however, true to form, was one of suspicion, conflict, and fury. Cyon and Vyshnegradski each charged the other more or less publicly with having taken much too large a cut on the deal. Cyon was therefore ejected from his brief tenure as an unofficial agent of the Russian finance ministry and proceeded to launch himself upon a series of violent public polemics, directed first against Vyshnegradski and then, after the latter's retirement in 1892, against his successor, the famous Count Sergei Yulyevich Witte. Both were charged by Cyon with the egregious mismanagement of Russia's public finances. Appearing in pamphlet form sometimes in Russian, sometimes in French or German, these tirades, launched at intervals over the years of the 1890s, were violent and at times even personally abusive, particularly in relation to Witte. "Where is the parvenu Witte leading Russia?" and "S. Yu Witte and his projects for the deliberate bankruptcy of Russia" were among their titles. By this means Cyon succeeded in adding to his numerous Russian enemies a man who was rapidly becoming the country's most powerful figure, the Tsar excepted.

Witte's revenge seems to have taken the form of pressures by the Russian government to deprive Cyon of the French citizenship he had by that time acquired. The French government, frantically eager at just that moment to obtain Russian ratification of the military convention secretly negotiated between the two countries the previous year, and anxious to please the Russians at all costs, not only complied with this request but denied to Cyon permission to reside further in France, thus compelling him to move to Switzerland, where he took a villa on the shores of Lake Geneva.

These attacks on the two Russian ministers of finance were, however, only the smallest part of Cyon's literary activity in the years of the early 1890s. Faced with the loss of his influential patrons in both France and Russia, Cyon abandoned high finance and the promotion of the alliance and applied himself with furious energy to other forms of literature. His book *La Russie contemporaine*, which first appeared serially in Madame Adam's *La Nouvelle Revue*, contained an interesting chapter on the Jewish problem in Russia—the only instance in which Cyon was to set forth at length his views on this question. Sharp and extreme, as always, it was the work of an impassioned assimilationist. Both the Russian government and the traditional Jewish religious establishment were taken to task: the government for confining the Jews to the Pale instead of giving them full rights, dispersing them throughout Russia,

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and striving for their conversion; the Jewish establishment for segregating itself by its own religious-social customs and its fussy exclusiveness. "The true solution to the Jewish question," he wrote, "and the only means of protecting the Empire from the economic dangers with which the continued rise in the Jewish population threatens it, is to cause them to lose all their peculiarities of custom and religion, to convert them to Orthodoxy by all means compatible with the spirit of Christian charity, and to assimilate them as rapidly as possible into the population of Russian origin." In accordance with this view, he firmly opposed the *numerus clausus* for their acceptance into official employment. Conversion alone, not numerical limitation, should henceforth, in his view, be the decisive factor governing the admission of Jews to governmental service.

Even more interesting, from the standpoint of Cyon's person rather than his views, was a venture into fiction. At the end of 1891 there began to appear in Madame Adam's magazine an anonymous novel, entitled *L'Abîme*, unquestionably from Cyon's pen. The scene was laid in Russia. The plot, characteristically, contained no heroes—only anti-heroes; but one of the latter—the best of the lot—was in part clearly autobiographically conceived. The traditional religious Jewish background is here transformed into that of the pious Orthodox "Old-Believer" community of the district "beyond the river" in Moscow—a community that, in its exclusiveness, in the Old Testament quality of its beliefs, and in its frequent commitment to a mercantile calling, did indeed bear certain resemblances to the one in which Cyon was born and raised. The hero/anti-hero is, like Cyon, a precocious child. Here, too, the pious father opposes the son's receiving a secular education; but an elderly relative insists successfully that he must have one. Like Cyon, then, he is trained as a physiologist, first at the Medical-Surgical Academy and later abroad. He is all right, one is allowed to understand—not a bad fellow actually; but he is too much the scientist and the agnostic—too smug in his worldly success, too resistant to higher impulses, too willing to sacrifice the life of the spirit to the life of the mind. Precisely because of this dry contentment with a scientific career, he fails to appreciate fully the young heroine and is unwilling to accept the burden of a genuine emotional commitment. This gives the villain—a demonic radical revolutionary who functions as the lady's tutor—the opportunity to lure the young lady away into the fearful recesses of the underground revolutionary movement. We find ourselves, at this point, thrust down into the familiar dark world of Dostoyevskian conspiracy: Nechayev, the Petrashevsky circle, and the cold-blooded murder of the suspected student-informer. The young lady, after years of enmeshment in the toils of underground violence, is finally caught and imprisoned.

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She is eventually released; but by this time she is ill, ruined, and abandoned, and she suffers an early and lonely death. Her onetime admirer, meanwhile, our hero/anti-hero scientist, has had great worldly success—wealth, public acclaim, all that one could wish—all but the richness of love and intimate companionship (all, that is, that Cyon could have had, had he sacrificed his principles and played the usual game). Receiving a letter from her as she nears her death, he rushes to her bedside but arrives too late. Repenting of his earlier misplacement of priorities, he attends the funeral, arranges for the grave, and returns to Petersburg to live out his luxurious but lonely life mourning the wasted opportunities of one who has made a fetish of science, has attempted to place it on a pedestal above the values of love and faith, and has paid the price.

There is something deeply pathetic and revealing about this short novel (which never saw publication as a book). There is in it, albeit in this curious form, all the tragedy of the mid-nineteenth-century Russian intellectual, sent spinning back and forth as in some great game of blindman's bluff, among the turbulent forces of the age: between the attractions and repulsions of the burgeoning scientific revolution; between the power of established religious faith and the fascination of a new rationalism; between love for parents and repugnance for all they stood for socially and philosophically. Small wonder that so many people, tossed about in this way, lost their balance and ended badly—even worse, in many instances, than did Cyon himself.

The novel, which one suspects to have been carried in the magazine by Juliette Adam only as an act of friendship, failed to attract significant attention. This must have been chalked up, in Cyon's battered psyche, as only the last of many disappointments; and this justifiably, for the book, compared to other and more widely published offerings of the time, was not all that bad.

But more disappointments were to come. The Grand Duke died in 1889. Cyon was still in possession of his wartime diary. In 1892 the interval before he was supposed to publish it expired. The question arose: what to do with it? It was presumably highly publishable; but did he really want to take this step? It could play into the hands of the Germans. Besides, he himself now needed the sympathy of high Russian quarters for support in his feud with Witte. Would he not do better by taking the question up personally with the Tsar—by using it as a channel of reconciliation with the Russian government? Instead of publishing it, in any case, he prepared a letter to the Tsar explaining the circumstances, and set off (we are now in September 1893) for Copenhagen, where Alexander III was spending what was destined to be the last of his many Danish vacations.

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It had long been a widely and firmly held conviction in official French circles that if you wanted to get through to the Tsar over the heads of his protective bureaucracy, the way to do it was to approach him during his vacations in Denmark where he had no one around him but his family and his intimate suite. This supposed verity (supposed, because the device seldom worked) had evidently even got through to Cyon. In his letter to the Tsar, after telling how he came into possession of the diary, he went on to say that the time had now come for him to make good on the promise he had made to the Grand Duke. But this, he continued, put him in some difficulty. The diary was replete with awkward revelations, and included many diplomatic and military documents, the publication of which would not be desirable at any time. To publish it in these circumstances would bring real harm to the vital interests of the Russian state. (What he had in mind was presumably the rumored recent conclusion of the Franco-Russian Alliance.) All this he felt obliged to bring to the monarch's attention. "The wise words of the Tsar," he concluded, "will determine the course to be followed."

Not surprisingly, the visit to Copenhagen was in vain. Cyon never got anywhere near the Tsar, and was reduced to presenting his letter to one of the latter's high-ranking personal aides, who accepted delivery of it and promised to submit it to the ruler. But no response was forthcoming; and Cyon, unable to wait indefinitely, was obliged to return to Switzerland, still clutching the diary, but no wiser than he was before.

Six months later, nothing still having been heard, he wrote to the Russian minister of education, a man who had at one time been well-inclined towards him, asking that the matter be brought to the Tsar's attention. To that communication, too, there is no record of any reply. The Tsar was by this time a very ill man. It may not have been possible to get his attention to the matter. In April 1895, the Tsar having in the meantime died, Witte convened a special high-level meeting, attended by the minister of justice and of internal affairs as well as by the head of the new Tsar's personal chancery, to consider Cyon's activities and to decide what to do about him. The decision taken was to forbid him any further residence abroad and to demand his return to Russia within a two-month period. It was privately agreed, though not so stated to Cyon, that he would, upon crossing the Russian border, be at once arrested and confronted with criminal charges.

Were these dispositions connected with the diary? There is nothing in the record of the meeting to prove it. Nor is there any direct evidence, anywhere, that Witte even knew about the diary. But the timing of the meeting, the extremely high level of the participants, and the inclusion of a representative of the Tsar's personal chancery all suggest that something more important than just Cyon's public attacks on Witte was

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involved. The congenital Russian preoccupation with the prestige of the imperial family would have explained why no mention of the diary episode was made in the record of the meeting. But there is strong evidence that those few highly placed Russians who were familiar with the matter were quick to sense in Cyon's approach to the Tsar, coupled with his continuing retention of the diary, a delicate form of blackmail, and that they reacted accordingly.

Cyon, in any case, upon receiving the summons to return to Russia, replied evasively, accepting the order in principle but professing inability to come at that time on account of illness. The Russian government, however, was having none of this. The response was the immediate issuance of a decree depriving him of Russian citizenship as well as of all his Russian titles and of whatever property he might own in Russia.

Two years later the head of the Paris office of the Russian secret police (the *okhrana*), an individual known as Petr Ivanovich Rachkovski, organized and caused to be carried out a raid, in Cyon's absence, on his villa in Switzerland. There is some evidence that this was done at the personal insistence of Witte, without the knowledge or approval of Rachkovski's police superiors. The fruits of the venture would appear to have been meager: all the intruders got, they reported officially, was a few pages of the draft of another pamphlet attacking Witte. But was there not something else they got and failed, for good reason, to report to their own immediate superiors? The available documentation provides no answer.

III

Eighteen ninety-seven, the year of the raid on Cyon's villa, marked, in any case, the abandonment of his public feud with Witte, and the beginning of his return to science. But at just this point, a new mystery, deeper and still more tantalizing, enters the literature surrounding his person.

That year of 1897, the reader might care to recall, marked the high point of the Dreyfus case in France. It must have been an excruciating experience for Cyon to follow these excitements in the French press; for while he himself was Jewish, some of his closest contacts in France, particularly on the military side, were among the most prominent of the anti-Dreyfusards—one of them, General Saussier, even, in all probability, a leading culprit of this dreadful miscarriage of justice. And it was in that same year of 1897, three or four years after Cyon's removal to Switzerland, that there took place, in the Swiss city of Basle, under the chairmanship of Theodor Herzl, the First Zionist Congress.

Cyon, of course, was no Zionist—quite the contrary. His views on the

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most desirable future for the Jewish people ran in precisely the opposite direction. While he must, of course, in the light of his background and preoccupations, have been interested in the Congress, taking place as it was so near to his Swiss residence, he obviously had not the faintest connection with it.

However. . . .

During the first years of the present century there surfaced and saw publication in Russia at least two versions of a document usually entitled the "Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion." It purported to set forth the plans of these supposed "Elders," or of the masonic lodges to which they were supposed to have belonged, for subverting and bringing under their control the societies and governments of the entire world. It was sometimes brought into connection with the Basle congress, the inference being that the so-called elders were the leaders of that gathering. Liberally translated at later dates into a number of other languages, this document came with the years to take a leading place among the various anti-Semitic forgeries of all time. It was extensively used by Russian reactionaries, before and after the Russian Revolution. It was used by the Nazis. Henry Ford, Sr., is said to have believed in its authenticity and to have recommended it to others for their enlightenment.

This was not, strictly speaking, an original forgery. It was rather a plagiarism, or, more precisely, a paraphrase, of a document written some thirty to forty years earlier. This last was a pamphlet, published in Brussels and circulated in Paris, written by a young French intellectual by the name of Maurice Joly, then an employee in the Bibliothèque nationale. It was entitled: *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu; la politique du XIX siècle.* A disguised attack on the regime of Napoleon III, biting, beautifully written, and held to a high level of political-philosophic discourse, the document was well worth reading in its own right. It was noteworthy in particular for the prophetic divination of the great totalitarian tyrannies of the twentieth century—horrors towards which, in Joly's view, Napoleon III was leading Europe.

Joly, punished by some two years in prison for his authorship of this document, survived the overthrow of the Napoleonic regime, and lived to the late 1870s in Paris. And it was this document that, many years after his death, someone in France picked up, paraphrased, and distorted, attributing its origin to an apocryphal body called the "Elders of Zion." The intent of the forger or forgers was evidently to show that either international Jewry or international freemasonry or both (it was hard to tell which) formed the center of a vast conspiracy for the gradual, non-violent, but insidious, conquest of world power.

Who did this work of falsification, and when and where was it done,

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has never been clarified. The document surfaced for the first time in Russia around the year 1905, when it was published there by Russian religious reactionaries associated with some of Russia's most viciously anti-Semitic circles. But there is no evidence that it originated in Russia. All the evidence suggests that it was drafted in France or Switzerland, in the French language, at some time in the period 1897–1900, was then taken to Russia, translated there into Russian around the year 1901, and published there, for the first time, three or four years later. The reader will note the coincidence of the supposed date of authorship—the final years of the 1890s—with the high point of the Dreyfus case in France, the convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basle, the raid on Cyon's villa, and the culmination of his attacks on Witte.

The most searching investigation of the origin of the "Protocols" was one conducted, just before and after the Second World War, by a French writer, evidently of Russian origin, now deceased, by the name of Henry Rollin. Rollin is said (the writer cannot vouch for the accuracy of these statements) to have headed, during the Second World War, the intelligence service of the Vichy regime; to have been, however, throughout that period, a secret agent of the British; to have fled successfully when the Vichy regime was liquidated by the Germans, and to have been picked up and flown clandestinely out of France by the British—to England, where he spent the rest of his days. He was, in any case, a man who had a great nose for secret and conspiratorial movements of one sort or another, and particularly for the reactionary ones connected with, or made use of by, the Nazis. He had written, just before the war began, a strange, learned, somewhat confusing but fascinating book entitled *L'Apocalypse de notre temps*. At least one edition of this book (it may have been the only one) was just appearing in Paris when the Germans occupied that city in 1940. The Nazis allegedly found the unsold stock, confiscated it, and destroyed it. Only a few copies—advance copies, perhaps—seem to have survived. Although it figures in the holdings of three or four American libraries, the book is now extremely rare. In it, Rollin dwelt at some length on the mystery of the "protocoles." And while he was, at the time, unable to solve this mystery, being able to trace the origins of the document no further than to the entourage of Cyon's onetime friend and associate, Juliette Adam, Rollin later, in the 1950s, shortly before his death, came to the conclusion that the author was none other than our Cyon. He corresponded about this with the late Boris Nikolayevski, the historian and erudite bibliographer of the Russian revolutionary movement; and Nikolayevski, shortly before his own death, came to accept the hypothesis of Cyon's probable complicity.

The evidence for this hypothesis, aside from certain of Cyon's

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associations in Paris and from the pun on his name in the title of the "protocoles," was the fact that these latter contained several passages that were wholly absent in Joly's pamphlet but did indeed seem to coincide with certain of the charges Cyon had been levying against Witte in his various polemic tracts. The similarities are indeed evident. There was certainly *some* connection, here, between the "protocoles" and the person of Cyon. But I am persuaded that this connection was not, and could not have been, what Rollin and Nikolayevski thought it was.

There are a number of reasons for this conclusion. Cyon hated many Jews, but not *because* they were Jews. He hated many non-Jews with equal intensity. His hatreds, in fact, were racially quite impartial. He deplored the exclusiveness of the traditional Jewish religious community and favored, everywhere, assimilation (of which he presumably saw himself as a shining example). But the incitement of hatred against Jews as a community, and this on a racial basis, never had a place among his enthusiasms. Witte, to be sure, married as he was to a Jewess, was sometimes charged in anti-Semitic circles with being "the friend of the Jews"; and Cyon did indeed attack him, as minister of finance, for his dealings with certain of the western European bankers—the Rothschilds and others—who were Jewish. The greatest object of Cyon's hatred, furthermore, seems to have been one of Witte's leading assistants, one Rothstein, who had evidently obtained under Witte the position that Cyon himself had coveted, and who was also presumably Jewish. But there is no evidence that Cyon ever saw Witte as involved in any sort of international Jewish conspiracy, as suggested by the "protocoles," or indeed that he ever believed in the existence of such a conspiracy. Engaged as he was in public attacks on Witte, he had no reason to embed further criticisms of that statesman in a spurious anonymous document of this nature where, even if they had eventually come to public attention, they might not have been traced to him, and might only have discredited him if they were so traced.

Most important of all are two other considerations. While Cyon loved to draw veils of semi-obscurity and mystery over his various enthusiasms and involvements, he rarely if ever concealed them entirely; he usually revealed something about them, if only to boast about them in later years. It is most unlikely that he could have been involved with other people, as he would have had to be, in a venture of this nature, and that no word of it ever leaked out. He was, after all, not living in France at the time; nor was he in touch with the people who might have joined him in such a venture. On the contrary, he was, at the time the "protocoles" were presumably written, already returning, with energy and dedication, to the scientific activity, even including lectures at the University of Bern, to which he was to devote most of the rest of his life. It is hard to

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imagine him combining such activity with the concocting of an anonymous paraphrase of Joly's pamphlet, then embedding in the pamphlet some of the very charges he has just been levying publicly against Witte, and smuggling the whole thing into Russia.

Finally, and most important of all: one must do Cyon the justice to say that he was too much the scholar—too much the scientist—too proud of his reputation as a man of facts and of scrupulous factual analysis—to lend himself to cheap falsification of the sort the "protocoles" represent. He was all that one will in certain of the less admirable qualities of the human species—oversensitive, contentious, suspicious, secretive, vindicative; but closest to his heart lay his pride as a scientist; and he was scarcely the man to betray this dedication in the way that his alleged authorship of the "protocoles" would suggest.

A much more likely source of the authorship of this document will be found somewhere around or between two colorful denizens of the Paris of that period. One was the notorious anti-Semitic publicist Edouard Drumont, author of *La France juive* and editor of the well-known and radically anti-Semitic paper *La libre parole*. The other was the same Petr Ivanovich Rachkovski, head of the Paris office of the Russian *okhrana*, and bitter enemy of Cyon, who masterminded the raid on the latter's villa. Drumont, it appears, had once been associated with Joly, as a journalist writing for the Paris paper *La Liberté*, in the early 1870s, and presumably knew of Joly's pamphlet. He is known to have made use, at one time, of another notorious and widely credited Russian forgery: the spurious "Will of Peter the Great." Whether he knew this was a forgery and made use of it anyway, or was unable to spot it as such, is unimportant. He was never choosy in his methods. Rachkovski, for his part, was a most disreputable character, once a member of the radical underground People's Will movement, but one who, upon being arrested by the authorities, apparently saved himself by turning informant and becoming, later, a regular foreign agent of the Russian Department of Police. Rachkovski is charged with the authorship of a number of false documents designed to incriminate Russian revolutionary exiles living in Paris, or—in some instances—to sow among them suspicion of one another. He is also said to have edited, on one occasion, a spurious document concocted by Drumont. These are all murky affairs; and the historian can be wholly sure of nothing. But both men, Drumont and Rachkovski, seem to have been anything but loath to employ the methods of falsification; they are known to have collaborated; Rachkovski evidently hated Cyon; and it would scarcely have been above either of them to introduce into the paraphrased passages of Joly's paper thoughts taken from Cyon's attacks on Witte—precisely as a means of throwing off the track any who might inquire too anxiously

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into provenance and authorship of the falsified document.

The final years of Cyon's life—the first decade of this century—were devoted almost entirely to science. The structure of the inner ear; the relationship of that organ to the human sense of three-dimensional space; the relationship of all this to Euclidean geometry; the physiological structure of the hypophysis; the errors of Kantian philosophy—papers on these and other scientific-philosophical topics now poured forth again from his untiring pen; some were in French, some in German, some in both languages, none in Russian. At the end of the decade there appeared what he, surely, regarded as his magnum opus: a hefty volume in the French language entitled *Dieu et Science*. A curious work it was—the combination of a fine scientific discipline and great erudition in the philosophy of science with sudden outcroppings of old personal aversions and resentments. Its purpose was to prove, first, that no a priori structure of thought is any stronger than the premises from which it proceeds; secondly, that no such premises may be regarded as sound unless they are substantiated by research in the natural sciences; thirdly, that no such research—great, and indeed fundamental, as this may be in other respects for the advance of civilization—can provide answers to the ultimate questions surrounding the origins and the nature of human life; fourthly, that man has no choice but to turn, for those answers, to religious faith; and finally, that this returning to religious faith is, indeed, precisely what an impressive proportion of the great scientists of all time have done. Intermingled with the elevated tone of the scientific and philosophic exposition are flashbacks to Cyon's views, experiences, and intellectual battles of the past, but particularly to his inaugural lecture at the Medical-Surgical Academy in 1873 and to his polemic with Paul Bert of the early 1880s. These, obviously, had been the high moments of his life, moments of bitter personal disappointment but—he remained convinced—of profound and unchallengeable insight—insight misunderstood and unappreciated at the time, to be sure, by what he saw as an intellectually corrupted and unworthy generation, but destined ultimately to be vindicated and recognized at their true worth by posterity.

Cyon died in Paris (when he moved back there nobody knows) in 1910, just as the second edition of *Dieu et Science* was appearing. He was given a Christian burial. Before his death, he donated his library to the University of Lausanne and his laboratory, togther with an endowment for a prize in experimental physiology, to the University of Bologna. His death produced highly respectful obituary articles in the Western scientific journals, usually punctured with brief and tactful references to his many other involvements. Outside these scholarly circles, memory of him rapidly faded. Some thirty years later, on the eve

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of the Second World War, an interested French scholar succeeded in unearthing his widow, living in an old ladies' home on the outskirts of Paris. He had been told that she had a trunk full of her husband's papers in a box under her bed; but she claimed that Cyon had actually burned them all before his death. After the war Henry Rollin, still in pursuit of the author of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," corresponded with her. She was proud of her husband's scientific distinction but was most reluctant to talk about his political and other involvements—she begged Rollin, in fact, not to inquire further into such matters. The right-wing circles to which Cyon had once attached himself "had ruined him," she said; and he, too, before his death, had come to curse them in retrospect.

IV

So much, then, for the bare outlines of the major involvements in the career of this most curious man, insofar as they are discernible through the clouds of obscurity behind which he loved to conceal them. Certain mysteries remain unpenetrated: ones concerning his personal life (a wife and daughter are known to have existed; a footnote in his last book refers to a son) and his relations with the Germans (he is known to have corresponded at some length with Bismarck's banker and confidant, Baron Bleichroder).

But enough is enough. In view of the hand of failure that rested with such regularity on the outcomes of Cyon's various undertakings, it might well be asked: why go to the trouble of recording the evidence of them at all? And why inquire into them, at the cost of so much effort, in the first place?

The answer lies partly in the fact that Cyon was, after all, a talented person, whose career touched upon a number of interesting and important historical questions. Of course, his faults were grievous ones and, for him, ultimately disastrous. His great thirst in life was really for recognition—recognition commensurate with his talents. Had he ever received this recognition, he would perhaps have been even more insufferable than he was. But his brilliance and originality as a scientist have been attested to at many points, and not least in the obituary notes and encyclopedia articles that have appeared since his death. His erudition was extensive, particularly in science, philosophy, and literature, as were his powers of communication. He wrote, with professional grace and ease, in at least three modern languages. Many of his views, especially with relation to the philosophy of science, were ahead of his time. Given a livelier sense of humor, a greater tolerance for the foibles of other people, a higher ability to associate his efforts successfully with those of others, and a willingness to concentrate, rather than to scatter,

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his various interests and undertakings, his achievements might well have earned him greatness.

But beyond this, Cyon's life finds historical value in its very comprehensiveness as a reflection of a given epoch (and a very fateful epoch it was) in the development of European civilization. The story of his career—neither entirely a Russian story, nor a Jewish one, nor a French one, nor one of the history of science, but a bit of all of these things—brings together in a single human experience most of the significant aspects of the age in which he lived: the excitements of its intellectual and spiritual life; its preoccupation with the interrelationships of science and religion; the various social and racial fermentations that racked its progress; the sweeping power of romantic nationalism, chauvinism, and militarism; and above all the abundant social affectations of a time when affluence was endeavoring to arrogate to itself the privileges and pretensions of a landed nobility which was now passing from the scene but which had until so recently been the leading arbiter of customs and conduct in Europe. In Cyon's time, these were ubiquitous, international phenomena; and they all found their reflection, in a manner seldom observable elsewhere, in the strivings and experiences of this one brilliantly gifted, but tragically handicapped, man.

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To Katie at Eighty

PETER HUGH DEVRIES

The world's a small, small place,
  So very small
That once in one embrace
  I held it all.

Your lips on mine close pressed,
  I held in trust
All that the past possessed
  That is not dust.

Given your hand and heart,
  I held in fee
Of Space and Time and Art
  Their instancy.

Your eyes caress me now.
  O Skies, contract!
And Time, slow down and bow
  Before one fact:

The world's a small, small place,
  So very small
That now in one dear face
  I hold it all.

PETER HUGH DEVRIES, now retired, was an English teacher at Michigan State University and an information specialist at the United States Department of Agriculture. This poem celebrates the sixty-first anniversary of his marriage to Catherine Otis.

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Catholic Itinerary

HEINZ R. KUEHN

THE FIRST ESSAY I WROTE IN ENGLISH appeared in the September 1957 issue of the Jesuit magazine *America*, six years after I had immigrated to the United States. In it I attempted to explain why my wife and I had given up a fairly comfortable and secure existence in Germany, and how we felt about the imminent event of our becoming American citizens. Its point was that, contrary to notions common in Europe, I believed that a German Catholic intellectual *can* become a true American, and that he can find a home in the American Church as well. Rereading the piece recently I saw, as in a flash, the incredible distance the world, the Church, and I had traveled in the span of a generation. There was in my description of my life and work as a Catholic writer and publicist in Berlin, and of my first experience of America and the American Catholic Church, a tone of freshness and contagious enthusiasm that made a fellow Catholic, when he read the yellowed copy of my firstborn English composition, exclaim, "Oh, for the age of innocence!"

Clearly, both of us had sensed a loss, had had a pang of that "you can't go home again" feeling. In my own life as a Catholic, I had indeed known an age of innocence, a period whose memories I cherish. I converted to Catholicism in 1934, at the age of fourteen, under the influence of my father, a historian and free-lance writer. My upbringing had lacked religious formation but had had an ecumenical flavor. My mother was Jewish and indifferent to formalized religion. My father, nominally a Protestant, was agnostic, yet on the insistence of his mother, a devout Catholic, my sister and I had been baptized Catholics. After our parents' divorce we were raised by our mother and grew up among West Berlin's worldly Jewish community, yet we went to schools where Protestant religious instruction was part of our curriculum. During our long summer vacations we were as likely to stay with paternal relatives in the Rhineland who were staunch Protestants as with maternal relatives in East Prussia who were orthodox Jews.

My father, with whom I visited regularly, made no attempt to direct my religious schooling, but once he had decided to convert to Roman

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Catholicism, our conversations turned increasingly to the subject. Above all, we talked about books. I was a precocious child and superficially conversant with the serious literature of the time. What my father now gave me was a point of reference and discernment. He was a Francophile, and his first accomplishment as a writer had been the German translation of Jules Michelet's classic *History of the French Revolution.* Being a product of the world of nineteenth-century liberal humanism, my father would have had to deny the very roots of his being had he been anything but completely open to this world. But he had seen that the Christian heritage, embracing the Semitic, Roman, Greek, and medieval cultures, furnished ample criteria with which to assess the form and substance of his favorite writers and thinkers, deepening the understanding and enriching the enjoyment of them. I learned to look with new and fresh eyes at such favorite authors of mine as Hermann Hesse, Rainer Maria Rilke, Heinrich Heine, and Thomas Mann, and, for that matter, Honoré de Balzac and Victor Hugo.

Not surprisingly, my introduction to Catholic thought and vision came through the great French Catholic writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as the poet Paul Claudel, the novelists Léon Bloy, Georges Bernanos, and François Mauriac, the philosophers Gabriel Marcel and Jacques Maritain, the literary critic Ernest Hello, and the historian Étienne Gilson. It was a powerful, if not, for a boy in his teens, overpowering introduction. Yet these writers became the soil in which developed the roots of my spirituality and intellectuality, as diverse as their views of the particulars of man's life and destiny may have been. As I grew older and my intellectual preferences and emotional needs changed, I listened to and became absorbed in other visionaries of the Catholic faith. Yet to this day their vision has for me remained valid at its core, unequaled in depth, breadth, and comprehensiveness by anything contemporary Catholic writing has to offer.

My formal catechetical instruction was minimal. I embraced the faith, as it were, hook, line, and sinker, trusting implicitly that I would deal with questions and doubts as they came along. The great canvas of Catholicism that had been painted for me in conversations and through readings still needed innumerable brush strokes and accents, but outline and perspective were in place. In the parish to which I then belonged, an affluent, upper-middle-class congregation in West Berlin, I joined an organization whose members were exclusively Catholic boys attending, as I did, a gymnasium in preparation for their university studies. National in scope, its name, *Neudeutschland* (New Germany), implied its aim: the renewal of German life in Christ, to be achieved by creating in business, industry, and the professions a network of Catholic men trained by the organization. Its ideology was, in retrospect, an amalgam

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of patriotism, Spartan asceticism, romanticism, and Catholic universalism, reflecting the tenets of the Jesuits who had founded the organization. What mattered to me was the companionship I found (after a youth spent in an environment indifferent to my inner life) among boys of my age, under the leadership of adults who shared my convictions. Those were the last years before the outbreak of World War II in which the Nazi regime still tolerated public manifestations of Catholic life, and we marched through the streets of Berlin with gusto, in black uniforms, led by drummers and flutists, under huge banners emblazoned with the heraldry of the Middle Ages. At our national meetings, in tent cities on the seashore or in a castle in the mountains, we listened to lectures by prominent writers and theologians, engaged in spiritual exercises, went hiking, and at night gathered around blazing fires to sing the Lieder of the Romantic era accompanied by guitars.

Yet at a time when I worried about the fate of my mother and my Jewish relatives and friends, I was uncomfortable with uniforms, drums, banners, and campfires. I would before long have broken with New Germany had it not been for the organization's intimate and relaxed weekly group meetings. Here we would talk about Christian heroes of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, about saints, emperors, mystics, and popes, whose spirit had found expression in Europe's majestic cathedrals and whose legacy was being kept alive in the great abbeys and among the various monastic orders of the Church. Here we would read and discuss, often by candlelight, the works of the Catholic German authors of the time: the theologian Romano Guardini, the philosopher Josef Pieper, the novelists Gertrud von LeFort and Reinhold Schneider. They and others gave me an abiding sense of tradition, a perception of the continuity of human thought, a sensitivity to the roots of religion in time and space, and above all a feeling of being at home in the inexhaustibly rich and diversified world of man's creative response to the existence of a living God. If these writers had merely offered me an escape into another unreality, I would have long forgotten them. Yet they perceived the uncertainties and tragedies of a Germany in the grip of fanaticism, and, knowing that open protest would have silenced them, they veiled their criticism and attacks in poems, novels, and treatises that revealed the perennial validity of the good, the true, and the beautiful in the settings of history and tradition. Better than most of my fellow New Germans, I understood the language of this clandestine resistance, and I found solace in their books.

By the time the war broke out I had been graduated from the gymnasium and had served my obligatory six-month stint in the Reich Labor Service. Banned as a half-Jew from attending a university, as well as from serving in the armed forces, I was drafted for civil defense work

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in the factories of Berlin. Because New Germany ceased to exist as an organization by decree of the regime, I joined, in the spring of 1940, a group that met once a week in the evening at Berlin's Catholic Student Home to discuss the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas. This "Thomas Circle," as we called it, consisted of some thirty young men and women, for the most part students deferred from military service and soldiers on leave or stationed in Berlin. Our leader was one of the most impressive and inspiring clergymen I have ever met. Thoroughly versed in scholastic philosophy and theology and possessing an extensive knowledge of science, literature, the arts, and music, he served not only as student chaplain but also as a prison and hospital chaplain and as parish priest. Eventually he was implicated in the July 1944 plot against Hitler, arrested while celebrating Mass, and deported to the Dachau concentration camp.

Up to that time, the panorama of literature and history had given me what I held to be sufficient underpinnings of my faith, animating and fleshing out the dry bones of catechism truths and infusing Church discipline and doctrine with meaning and purpose. Now, at the Thomas Circle, the merciless logic of Aquinas, the "Dumb Sicilian Ox," challenged my convictions and preferences with words such as *ens* and *essentia*, *forma* and *materia*, *universalitas* and *particularitas*, and *causa prima* and *causa secunda*, and forced me, forced us to give names to things that, because they suited our emotions, we had rarely bothered to hold up to the light of reason. We did not attempt to escape from the inexorable condition of our lives into the rarified atmosphere of the *philosophia perennis*. We were, after all, a generation raised on Goethe's *Faust* and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. We lived in a world of divided loyalties and clashing ideologies, in a city that began to disintegrate under relentless bombing raids. We had read André Gide and Charles Baudelaire, Byron and Bertolt Brecht. Our common bond was our faith and our love of the Church, neither of which we questioned. At stake was to prove the adequacy of a Christian philosophy to our time and our critical minds. Our leader was up to the task of proving this adequacy to us. The amazing thing is that in the two short years of the existence of the Thomas Circle, he succeeded in laying for us an intellectual and moral foundation that not only could bear the weight of the time but lasted through all the vicissitudes of our lives. For me and those of my fellow Thomists who survived the concentration camps and the war, the Thomas Circle has remained to this day the most significant and far-reaching influence in our intellectual formation.

Looking back at those chaotic years I spent in war-torn Berlin, the long days of grinding work in factories, the even longer nights in air raid shelters, I am still awed by the incredible circumstance that at such a

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time I should have encountered—on the heels, as it were, of St. Thomas—yet another great figure of Christianity who was to have a decisive influence on my development: St. Benedict. By the time the Thomas Circle had ceased to exist, my father had become a permanent resident in a Benedictine convent some forty kilometers south of Berlin. It was a new foundation, consisting of some twenty sisters who originally had been nurses in a Berlin hospital and whose devotion to the liturgical prayers of the Church had eventually led them to form a community after the Benedictine model. They bought a former Junker estate, named it the Priory of St. Scholastica, and led a frugal life in strict accordance with the Benedictine motto: Ora et labora. They cultivated the fields, raised some livestock, and ran a bakery that supplied the neighboring parishes with the Eucharistic bread. Two monks were assigned to them to teach them Gregorian chant and the practice of the liturgical hours. As word spread of their unique community, they attracted guests for whom they provided modest accommodations.

Here I got to know the richness and depth of the liturgical life of the Church, a disciplined mode of prayer and adoration I readily made my own because of its simplicity and profundity, and its complete freedom from sentimentality. Uncertain from hour to hour whether I was going to be killed by a bomb or shipped to a concentration camp, I lived with an intensity that needed sustenance in a measure none of my favorite writers or thinkers could offer. St. Benedict proved congenial. In the bomb shelters of the city where life was reduced to its basest instincts, no prayer, no poem proved more suitable than a psalm. In the crushing tedium of my work in the factory, in the solitude of my furnished room, nothing proved more invigorating and inspiring than humming or whistling a Gregorian tune.

Yet spiritual animation and edification was not the only reason why the priory became indispensable to me. Most of the guests were intellectuals and professionals who found in the priory a community congenial to their mode of life, thought, and prayer. Among them were many converts or prospective converts: converts from Communism, from atheism and agnosticism, from Judaism and Protestantism. All of us had gone through the German system of higher education; all of us had had to test our mode of life, our convictions, our faith against the brutal perversion of values in the society in which we lived. It was this, as well as the variety of our experience and knowledge, that gave to our conversations that special quality of substance, tone, and flavor I have found nowhere else since. Conversation to us was a form of art characterized, not by display of knowledge or wit or originality, but by a quest for truth that drew its sparkle from the very variety of judgment and experience among us. The grim setting in which we lived permitted no

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dross, whether we talked about Virgil or Rembrandt, Goethe or Marx, photography or architecture.

As soon as the war ended, I enrolled at the University of Tuebingen in a program of philosophy, history, and theology, but I felt stifled in the atmosphere of university life and soon returned to Berlin to begin a career as a writer. I wrote a book about angels that became and has remained a major reference work on the subject; a book about several priests and laymen executed by the Nazis for their resistance to the regime; and a biography of Cardinal Mindszenty; and I translated one of the major works of Joseph de Maistre. In addition, I served as co-editor of Berlin's diocesan paper, wrote reviews and articles for several German newspapers and magazines, and became a regular participant in the cultural and religious programs of RIAS (Radio in the American Sector).

In the sense that enthusiasm, trust, purity of motives, and authenticity of feelings characterize innocence, the thirties and forties were, in my life as well as in the life of the Church as I knew it, what my friend had spontaneously called an "age of innocence." Our innocence had nothing to do with naiveté. In the span of two decades, our practice of Catholic Christianity had been tested both under the terror of a dictatorship and in the freedom of the West German modern democracy that followed the reign of the Nazis. We had witnessed heroism and martyrdom among priests and lay people. We also had seen cowardice and treachery, but our perception of the Church, formed and sustained as much by the writers and theologians of our age as by the popes and parish priests, included the Church of sinners as fully as it included the Church of saints. We had no serious quarrels with the Church as an institution. We believed in its doctrines and took its discipline seriously. We knew we often failed the Church's expectations, but we also recognized its shortcomings as clearly as we recognized our own. Above all, there was a "feel," a quality about "being Catholic," that was akin to that kind of gentle, self-deprecating humor with which members of a large family living under the same roof accept each other's follies and foibles.

In our parishes, many of us were engaged in fostering the aims of the liturgical movement that, under the impetus of the great Benedictine abbeys of Beuron and Maria Laach, strove for a renewal of the religious life through an intelligent and full participation of the people in the Church's liturgy. We were intensely interested in new and experimental methods of pastoral care, as exemplified by the worker-priests in France. We had no shortage of great Catholic literature. We listened with admiration and often with compassion to Pius XI and Pius XII as they guided and encouraged us in our struggles to preserve the integrity of the Church and the freedom and dignity of the individual under the

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ideologies of Communism, Fascism, and Nazism, and amidst the erosion of fundamental values by the mass culture of Western society. If we had any quarrel with the Church, we wanted it to move faster, more energetically, to renew and reform itself and the world according to our vision and expectations.

When I arrived in America in November 1951, I was married, and my wife and I were expecting our third child. We settled in a black neighborhood in Milwaukee, and since my knowledge of Shakespearean English bore no resemblance to any language skills necessary for a white-collar job, I went to work as a laborer in a brewery. My sponsor, a well-to-do advertising executive and deeply committed Irish Catholic, did not let a month go by before he made me join the Holy Name Society, a national society of Catholic men; and then, capitalizing on my background, he promoted me among the society's parochial groups as a speaker of national prominence. Before I knew how to say the "Our Father" in English or how to explain a stomach ache to a physician, I was addressing "Holy Name Breakfast Meetings" Sunday after Sunday on the subject of "Six Years Behind the Iron Curtain." In and around Milwaukee, I spoke before Irish Catholic groups, German Catholic groups, Italian Catholic groups, and groups of no particular ethnic identity; and everywhere the church and the meeting hall were crowded, blue-collar workers were as numerous as white-collar workers, and young people were in attendance in surprisingly large numbers. Every church had attached to it a school and a convent, and often, in the suburbs and subdivisions particularly, the church and the rectory seemed to have been tacked on as an afterthought to the spacious grounds and imposing buildings of the school.

All of this was new to me; I was deeply impressed by the proud, healthy, open face the American Church turned to me. By now I had become an insurance agent, and my evenings were no longer destroyed by that fatigue that used to overpower me after a day's work in the factory. Having time to make friends, I found them among Catholics who were writers or editors with *The Milwaukee Journal* or teachers at Marquette University, and among the priests of the local parishes. I could not have wished for a better introduction to American letters, Catholic and non-Catholic, aside from enjoying conversations in which some of my favorite authors, with whose works I had grown up, were discussed not only in a different language but also from the perspective of a culture that was still new and often incomprehensible to me. Even after some thirty years, I still remember with delight the many evenings we spent discussing, for example, Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station* or J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, or David Riesman's *Lonely Crowd*, or the stories of Flannery O'Connor, who was then

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beginning to attract notice. Moreover, as I began to understand America and to cherish living in a society that permitted, indeed encouraged, individualism and self-expression, I also saw that the same spirit that is at the heart of a democratic republic can enrich and enliven the Church without degenerating (as is happening today) into harsh divisiveness and irreparable fragmentation.

In 1956 I moved with my family to Chicago where a trade association hired me as a writer and editor, an occupation that has remained my full-time employment to this day. Eventually we bought a big old house in a suburb, in a parish composed largely of families of Irish ancestry and in a neighborhood nicknamed "Fertile Acres" because of its preponderance of large families. With our five children, soon to be joined by a sixth, we fit in well. We enrolled the children in the parish school run by Ursuline nuns, joined the Home and School Association and the Band Boosters, made friends with the parish priests and the nuns, bought a huge secondhand station wagon, started a savings account for the children's college education—in short, did everything we thought necessary to establish ourselves and our children securely as good citizens, good Catholics, and good neighbors. Searching for more stimulating intellectual and emotional fare than that which the parish could offer, we found in Chicago an abundance of groups and organizations catering to every imaginable interest of Catholic intellectuals, from literature and history to the rhythm method and the use of the vernacular in the liturgy. Occasionally we visited the Benedictine abbey of St. Meinrad in southern Indiana, an old, large Swiss foundation with a strong emphasis on the liturgical life, the arts, music, and scholarship, where I refreshed and renewed my sense of tradition, which is vital to my perception of the Church but which the life of a surburban parish can rarely sustain.

The world, our world, was intact. We had, as the saying goes, "arrived" in our new country. Far from being indifferent to or complacent about its problems—inside the Church and outside of it—which foreshadowed the turbulent decades to come, we felt at home. I had never before known the stability of a peaceful society. I was fourteen when Hitler rose to power out of the collapse of the Weimar Republic, twenty when the Second World War began, twenty-six when Germany lay in ruins. Then, at almost forty, I had my *belle époque*, that sense of a world at peace which my father's generation had enjoyed before the First World War. It was at that time also that I wrote my first free-lance article in English—the *America* piece that reflected the "age of innocence"—and soon I became a regular contributor to Catholic and other periodicals.

The election in 1960 of John F. Kennedy to the presidency pleased me, not because he was a Catholic but because I hoped that it would

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lead to a rejuvenation of the spirit that had characterized American democracy in its infancy and would contribute to the country's growing maturity as a world power. Instead, the decade following his election changed America's mores and social values radically. Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. Pope John XXIII summoned the Second Vatican Council. The G. D. Searle Company introduced "the Pill." Rachel Carson published *The Silent Spring*, Timothy Leary *The Psychedelic Reader*, Betty Friedan *The Feminine Mystique*, and Charles Reich *The Greening of America*, books whose titles became first slogans, then clichés. Their messages inspired all kinds of movements, cultures, and countercultures, from the creative and reformatory to the anti-social and self-destructive as the issues of civil rights and free speech took on the ominous tones of ultimatums, threatening civil war. Among Catholic writers, Thomas Merton emerged as the clearest and purest voice, inspiring not so much a movement or a culture as something amounting to a cult. Finally, John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., were assassinated, and the United States was drawn into the morass of Vietnam. It was the end of my *belle époque*.

Yet the mood abroad in the land and in the Church during that incredible decade of the sixties was also contagiously liberating and invigorating. Whatever was good and valid and essential in the greening of America and the renewal of the Church shone through the excesses, the distortions, the tragic aberrations, and the abuses. I became involved. Being active on behalf of a good cause seemed more important, more rewarding, than spending my evenings and weekends writing or reading. I marched in demonstrations for civil rights and open housing, and supported the work of one of my daughters who had taken up residence in one of Chicago's black neighborhoods. I taught an evening course at one of the local colleges on the historical and cultural foundations of the New Testament scriptures, and a similar course in my parish, both of which proved popular in light of the rising interest among Catholics in the scriptural foundations of Christianity; and I gave talks on such subjects as "Future Shock" or "Child and Family in the Modern World."

I welcomed the Second Vatican Council with enthusiasm and followed its proceedings with rapt eagerness. Much of what my wife and I envisioned for the Church and what we had worked for in Germany now seemed to come to fruition. We joined what in our parish was called the "Ten O'clock Mass," or "Gym Mass," one of those experimental masses that came into vogue and were usually held at a time and location different from the regularly scheduled worship in the parish church proper. Latin had been universally replaced by the vernacular as the language of the liturgy. But, at the "Gym Mass," the still carefully

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structured and regulated form of worship now became a way of expressing various ideals and causes—whether civil rights, women's liberation, peace and justice, ecclesial reform, or pure air and water—that at the moment inspired the participants. Poems or excerpts from the works of Thomas Merton or the speeches by Martin Luther King were likely to replace some of the prescribed readings of the liturgical texts, and instead of singing a hymn appropriate for the day or the season, we would join in "We Shall Overcome" or one or another folk song of the Pete Seeger variety. Sometimes personal testimonials—about married life or the single life, about peace, love, or community—took the place of the priest's homily. Guitars, flutes, harmonicas, and percussion instruments furnished the music; the walls of the cheerless place were covered with homemade banners, and flowers walled in the makeshift altar; and we danced, not in the aisles but between the rows of metal chairs, clapped hands, embraced, and kissed.

My excitement over these first spontaneous manifestations of the renewal of the Church was, alas, short-lived. The Council's documents had spoken of that renewal clearly, sanely, and thoughtfully. What I heard and saw in my parish and elsewhere reminded me increasingly of Goethe's Faust who, when asked by Margaret how he held it with religion, replied:

> Fill up your heart with it, great though it is,
> And when you're wholly in the feeling, in its bliss,
> Name it then as you will,
> Name it Happiness! Heart! Love! God!
> I have no name for that!
> Feeling is all in all;
> Name is but sound and smoke,
> Beclouding Heaven's glow.

The "new Church" and the "new theology" seemed to play into the hands of a world gone berserk with emotions. My father and I, and the converts of our respective generations, had been drawn to Catholic Christianity because it is a religion grounded in distinctions, where everything has a name and an identity: truth and falsehood, good and evil, discipline and dissipation, knowledge and conjecture. Human history has a meaning and a purpose, a *telos*, or, as Teilhard de Chardin expressed it, an alpha and an omega. Aristotle and Virgil, Mozart and Chagall belong to this meaning and purpose, as do St. Augustine, Plato, Nietzsche, and Schleiermacher.

Now distinction and identity were irrelevant, and the only things that counted were "happiness, heart, and love." In my parish, the priests, shedding their clerical title with their Roman collar, now became Jim

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and Bill and Ed. The convent became empty as the younger sisters, donning "civvies" and talking about relevance to the world, moved into apartments and took secular jobs, or enrolled in courses in psychology or sociology. Homemade banners proclaiming the celebration of one thing or another were hung among the delicate frescoes in the sanctuary of the parish church, and "Amazing Grace" was now sung with the same frequency as Luther's "A mighty fortress is our God" was sung by the Evangelical reformers five hundred years ago. Then Jim left the priesthood and went into public relations, Bill left and became a real estate salesman, and Ed left and married Sister Agnes.

"Gefühl ist alles; Name ist Schall und Rauch." My faith, my spirituality were not those of Faust. For better or worse, I needed name, distinction, and identity. Finding them no longer in the one institution that once had cut through the modern world's babble with a clear and distinct voice, I withdrew from the "Gym Mass," the civil rights marches, and the regular excursions into the black neighborhoods, and I finally gave up even the scripture courses where my critical and analytical presentations met with a diminishing return in interest and understanding.

Yet because I had six children I had to come to terms, not only intellectually but existentially, with a churning world and a Church whose face had become enigmatic. Among the young, the greening of America rarely produced the joy, the hope, the exuberant promise, the lovely virginity of springtime. But drugs, sexual license, and civil disobedience tested my perception of a country I had embraced as a new home for myself and that I had hoped would nourish in my children the "pietas et amor in patriam" I myself had never known. The forces that had contrived to rend the social fabric of America were also challenging, in the eyes of my children, the veracity of my faith and the credibility of my life as a Catholic. At stake for my wife and me was the validity of the Christian vision of the world, the cosmos of Christian virtues and values that we endeavored by our own example and with the reinforcement of a Catholic school to pass on to our children. But the means by which the faith had traditionally been passed on from generation to generation—teaching, reading, conversation, customs, rituals, worship, and family and community—were themselves in disarray and rendered virtually powerless against voices that spoke cogently and persuasively to the mind and emotions of the young.

The often tragic consequences of the havoc that the sixties and seventies played among families with growing children are still being felt. My own children survived these turbulent decades essentially unscathed; they are now young adults, some with families of their own. None has a particular affection for the Church as an institution. Their

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values and their vision of the world are, more or less consciously, impregnated by the values and visions of Christianity; and since our family is close-knit, they feel at home among Christian traditions and symbols. They respect my wife's and my convictions, and we respect theirs.

In 1972 I summed up the effect of the greening of America and of the renewal of the Church on my own life in another article for *America*. It was entitled "Turning to Silence," and the editors prefaced it as follows: "After the first rousing experience of Church renewal, at least a minority of American Catholics appear to be changing concerns. Militancy and social commitment have given way to silence and listening." Their statement aptly expressed the gist of my essay. I had indeed entered into a new mode of practicing my faith, a mode whose character has not changed significantly since. I am a member of no organization; I represent no cause; and from the itemized deductions on my income tax returns, nobody could deduce my persuasions except that I believe in charity. I work, I read, I write occasionally; but even though I hold strong convictions, I "do" nothing.

"We thinking men, because we are thinking men, do nothing," says Dostoyevski's hero in *Notes from the Underground*. Yet there is something that believing and thinking Catholics *must* do. Intellectual preferences and social predilections aside, the *locus* where Catholics practice their faith as members of a community and where they "work their salvation" (to use a phrase no longer fashionable) by participating in the sacramental life of the Church is primarily the parish. Outwardly, the life of my parish, to which I have belonged for twenty-five years, has not changed much under the influence of Vatican II. The convent of the sisters who used to teach my children now serves as a home for the elderly; lay teachers have replaced the nuns in the schools; and enrollment in the eight grades of the school has dropped from about twelve hundred in the sixties to some four hundred today (while tuition rose from $50 to $565). Yet parish organizations still flourish, the "Gym Mass" continues, and the church is still comfortably filled on Sundays and feast days; only the queues of penitents before the confessionals on a Saturday afternoon have virtually disappeared. Confession is no longer popular. The changes most noticeable to the eye and ear surround the core and heart of parish life, the liturgy of the Mass. Reflecting the Council's emphasis on the participation of the laity in the liturgical life, men and women, performing tasks once the exclusive privilege of the priests, read the scriptural texts from the pulpit, distribute Communion, and take the Eucharistic bread to the sick. Altar boys now mingle with altar girls. These changes were made for valid theological and pastoral reasons; some of my own writings had advocated them. If only more

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lectors understood what they are reading and knew how to read it well. If only the men and women around the altar knew how to dress and move in a sacred space. If only the melodies and lyrics of the modern hymns had meaning and character. And if only the English version of the texts reflected something of the grandiose sobriety of the Latin original or the stately beauty of the King James version. Once in a while the performance comes off and captures the quiet beauty and mystery of a liturgical ritual. But, for the most part, notwithstanding an enormous amount of goodwill, the auditory and visual effect all too often is that of a first rehearsal of a play by amateur actors. Too much is still experimental; too much reflects a lack of basic knowledge; too much is mediocre; too much simply lacks elemental skill, style, taste, and form.

Yet I have not returned to silence because of the fumblings of a parish community finding itself caught in the no-man's-land between an "old Church" that was abruptly taken away and a "new Church" that has not yet grown roots. There is more room for humor than for resignation when participating in performances that lay bare the perennial tension between the real and the ideal, the sacred and the profane. Nor am I silent because I am suffering from a crisis of faith. My vision of the Church as a living and enduring covenant between God and his creation has remained intact. Moreover, I fully accept "change" in the Church if it is an authentically Catholic response to the social, psychological, and moral realities of the post-modern age. I have opted for silence because I have to listen before I can respond to change, and in order to sort out my position on the issues that rend the institution and blur the essential tasks of the Church. How am I to fit the new relevancy into my vision? Vatican II furnished an admirable blueprint for a new Church; but, in spite of a relentless flood of literature on every imaginable issue, for the most part "little fish are talking like whales," to paraphrase a comment by Oliver Goldsmith on Samuel Johnson's style. I wait and listen because I am not yet ready to adjust myself—together with Catholics as prominent as William F. Buckley, Jr., and Malcolm Muggeridge, among others—to the melancholy truth that my generation is witnessing the end of Christianity as we knew it.

Commenting on the turbulence of the sixties, Thomas Merton once wrote, "I will have to stop preaching or preach only by silence, because no matter what you say, you seem to be saying yes to something you cannot in conscience approve of." For me, choosing silence is not so much a matter of conscience (although it is that, too) as of a profound distaste for becoming drawn into the internecine wrangles of today's Church that bury the Word under an avalanche of words, drowning out the voices that speak on behalf of a universal truth and a catholic Church. The "seamless garment" that the archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Cardi-

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nal Bernardin, held up to the warriors of special ecclesial interests has found few takers. How can it be otherwise? Sacred culture is intertwined with secular culture. Perhaps the survival of that "ghetto mentality" that is now under relentless attack by the advocates of "relevancy" will be the ultimate test for the survival of the Church, precisely for the same reasons that explain the survival of the Jews for two millennia of bigotry, hatred, and persecution. As Aba Eban expressed it for the Jews in *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews*, "What lifted the Jews from obscurity into a central and permanent place in history has sometimes been called a passion for meaning. . . . Underlying this passion for meaning was the invisible power of the body of law and tradition called the Talmud."

For my part, the glow and excitement of being a Catholic that was our strength during the Nazi era and my joy when I discovered the American Church have largely turned inward. Readily at hand on the shelves of my study are the masters of the multi-dialectical language of faith, from the prophets and the psalmists to the Gospels and St. Augustine, from Thomas Aquinas to Karl Rahner, sustaining remembrances of a Church that was possessed by a passion for meaning and guided by the invisible power of a body of law and tradition. What haunts me and countless others who have opted for silence is the question of what today constitutes the "real Church," the Church of the seamless garment, the Church that has mystery and style, scholarship and great literature, and (in the purest meaning of the phrase) a significant language. That question is also never far from the mind of intelligent committed Catholic activists, whether they work for a specific aspect of ecclesial renewal, like my wife, or are devoted to some other cause. Recently someone sent me an article from a German newspaper featuring a man who had received West Germany's highest decoration for his efforts as a journalist to improve the relations between the German Federal Republic and the State of Israel. That man had been a close friend of mine during the war years in Berlin. He, too, was a half-Jew and had been a fellow participant in the Thomas Circle. Together we had outwitted the Gestapo on a number of occasions. We drifted apart after the war and had not heard from each other for forty years. I sent him a note that said simply, "Remember the Thomas Circle?" and signed it with my name. A few days later he was on the telephone. His first words were, "Heinz! Mensch! The Thomas Circle—that was real life, nicht wahr? That was still the real Church!"

Seen under the aspect of time still allotted to me, my itinerary in the Church is coming to an end. Seen under the aspect of hope, my itinerary is open-ended. There is still faith; there still are conversions; and faith still inspires, occasionally, good art, good architecture, good music, and,

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once in a great while, even good literature. A few years ago, while I was in France, I visited the Benedictine monastery of St. Benoît-sur-Loire, a few hours' drive from Paris. In the crypt of its eleventh-century Romanesque basilica now rest the relics of St. Benedict, where they were transferred after the destruction in World War II of their original shrine in the monastery of Monte Cassino in Italy. The abbey of St. Benoît is new, an architectural and artistic masterpiece—and virtually empty. The order lacks vocations here. Yet the monks are in possession of a thriving and nearly monopolistic industry—the manufacture of large-scale stained-glass windows for cathedrals and churches. The windows are made according to the methods employed in the Middle Ages and are reputed to equal the exquisite quality and appearance of the windows of that age.

I am a creature to whom symbols speak eloquently, and I thought of St. Benoît-sur-Loire recently when I read a feature in *Scientific American* on the devastating effects of modern air pollution on the stained-glass windows of medieval architecture. Their glass may be corroding and dissolving, I thought, the colors may be irreversibly bleached and altered, but while we justly decry this tragic loss, new windows are being made in the heart of France, according to the recipes of the age that produced these glories. Who knows, sanity and grace may yet prevail, the air may clear, and after the convulsive transformations of the modern age, the greening of America and the renewal of the Church may begin in earnest.

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The Body

FREDERICK MORGAN

The body frozen in the lake
  rose up again in spring.
It could not be identified
at first, despite the golden hair,
  despite the ruby ring.

Its finder could not shake the chill
  and suffered sleepless nights
while law and medicine assumed
their harsh assignments, and the press
  performed its squalid rites.

It was the teeth that told the tale:
  a woman from away
who'd said good-bye to the warm Gulf
and placid coasts of pine and scrub
  one bright midsummer day,

and driven north a thousand miles
  to the city on the lake.
Then came six changes of address,
smart clothes, chic nightclubs, and new friends
  whose names could not be traced.

The owner of a roadside inn
  where she and a man had stayed

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remembered that long yellow hair
and how she had "the sweetest smile,"
  but sometimes seemed afraid—

and other fragments of her past
  came drifting into view . . .
The finder of the body, though,
felt such strange harrowing within
  he could not see it through,

but left the city on the lake
  before the cold returned.
For twenty years the memory
of that poor body, rising up,
  lurked in his heart and burned,

until she came to him in dream
  with flowers in her hands
and said, "Forget me, patient friend,
for where I am love has its end,
  and *no one* understands."

✪ FREDERICK MORGAN's next book, *Poems: New and Selected*, is to be published early in 1987 by the University of Illinois Press.

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The Dress

PATRICIA PHILLIPPY

When my mother opened the cedar chest
her eyes held more hopes than that box.
She set aside pearled gloves,
child's hair in cellophane,
a mink collar, a comforter,
until she found the going-away dress,
worn after her wedding
like an envelope to send her on her way.
She tore away yellowed tissue
and dressed me in light blue wool.

And I wear it for you now,
coming home to you from the visit
you refused to make. You,
who are a delicate subject
though they asked after you,
my clandestine adulthood.

The weekend's dishes are piled in the sink
and our Russian Blue rubs my ankles to be fed.
I will change.
But see. The styles
have returned to this. It has kept
the years between its folds, and
fits me now as though I were the one
who opens the cedar chest
in silence, fingers the treasures
and repeats their histories to the child
who is not there.

Perhaps she is thinking of you.

✪ PATRICIA PHILLIPPY's poems have appeared in *Antioch Review, Literary Review,* and other journals. She was awarded the 1985 Thomas McAfee Discovery Prize from *Missouri Review.*

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Look It Up! Check It Out!

JACQUES BARZUN

IN ADVANCED CIVILIZATIONS the period loosely called Alexandrian is usually associated with flexible morals, perfunctory religion, populist standards and cosmopolitan tastes, feminism, exotic cults, and the rapid turnover of high and low fads—in short, a falling away (which is all that decadence means) from the strictness of traditional rules, embodied in character and enforced from within.

But another sign of such times is: reference books. The old civilization has piled up works of the mind for centuries—the attic is crammed full—and direct access to the treasures grows less easy, less frequent, as the social revolution brings more and more of the untaught and the self-indulgent out of bondage. At that point the museum is born, and the research library. And the inmates—scholars and specialists—begin to digest, organize, theorize, and publish reference books. The term *Alexandrian* comes from the famous establishment of this sort—the *Mouseion*, the Muses' library and scholar's hostel, at Alexandria in the third century B.C.

Alexandrianism comes in various sizes; small ones can be followed by vigorous returns to discipline, firsthand knowledge, and creativeness, as happened at the tail end of the Middle Ages and again at the turn of the eighteenth century. Similarly, a healthy barbarian invasion clears the air and the bookshelves. But during the very pleasant time of relaxed mental life through culture by handbook, nobody can tell what is to happen next. Today, judging solely by the output of reference books, one would say that our Alexandrianism was of the largest dimensions since Alexandria itself.

Just try to count the guides to single subjects, from poetry and gastronomy to witchcraft and world myths; the "companions" to world literatures; the "encyclopedias of modern culture"; the tremendous Scribner series of reading-reference works that digest in single chapters the lives and works of writers from Homer to Pinter, or that survey such large subjects as American Diplomatic History, Shakespeare, and the Dance.

JACQUES BARZUN, the well-known critic and historian, will publish in the fall a collection of his essays on language, *A Word or Two Before You Go*.

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The shelves creak under the collections of facts and extracts: of book reviews, biographies, quotations—general, medical, legal, humorous, biographical, classical, and foreign. With *Literary Anecdotes*, the Oxford Press has opened a new series of tidbits, to which an excellent *Aphorisms* by John Gross was soon added. We also have lists of everything—of books, naturally, but also of authors, artists, abbreviations, museums, as well as of portraits, nicknames, fictional characters, mammals, and former U.S. governors. The Gale Research Company publishes in many volumes excerpts of literary criticism from the earliest times to last week. Finally, with the computer and its capacity for alphabetizing, classifying, and regurgitating has come the blind fury of compilation. Innumerable repertories appear, each ostensibly useful to some researcher—and who that can read is not today a researcher, by necessity, accident, or choice?

The Alexandrian outlook includes one other important subject of concern: language. Studying texts soon turns the searchlight from ideas to words, after which language as a whole seems to hold the secret of all the great questions. Today, many otherwise sober persons believe language to be the real author of poems and plays; philosophers argue that usage observed will answer the riddles of Being; and even scientists turn verbalist when they speak of a genetic "code" or account for disease by supposing "information" to be carried hither and yon by cells or molecules. Information theory, not interested in message, but in the chances of getting its form across, nonetheless tries to dominate psychology, linguistics, and anything else in which meaning still lurks untouched by abstraction. The point of the game is what we all used to do as children—repeat a word over and over till its meaning is emptied out.

So we should look at some dictionaries and other books about words. Besides the well-known for everyday use in the home, the college, and the office, there are hundreds of others that profess to throw light on language, whether to improve writing and guide usage or to spur the love of words, to encourage verbal playfulness and tickle curiosity, or simply to record. In bulk, they suggest heroic patience and persistence. This very week, as I write, the first volume of *DARE* has appeared, that is, *The Dictionary of American Regional English*, a monumental project that has been under way for generations.

We shall see in a moment the lights such works throw on our collective mind. But first a few more general observations:

So much compiling and disseminating of data in small bundles is surely an orgy of self-consciousness. We seem to live mainly in order to see how we live. This effort brings on what might be called the externalizing of knowledge; with every new manual there is less need for its internal, visceral presence. The owner or user of the book feels confident that he possesses its contents—there they are, in handy form

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on the handy shelf. And with their imminent transfer to a computer, that sense of possession will presumably attach itself to the screen and the call number of the data bank.

To say this is also to say that the age of ready reference is one in which knowledge inevitably declines into information. The master of so much packaged stuff needs to grasp context or meaning much less than his forebears: he can always look it up. His live memory is otherwise engaged anyway, full of the arbitrary names, initials, and code numbers essential to carrying on daily life. He can be vague about the rest: he can always check it out.

For still greater ease, there are people everywhere whose sole job in life it is to look it up and check it out. I mean the researchers and verifiers on the staffs of periodicals, publishers, broadcasting stations, government bureaus, and private agencies of every sort, whether promoting a cause or monitoring a menace. No doubt these earnest minds know something in the ancient sense, but it is only a small part of what they look up and check out and send forth as true. Much of their work we receive free and unsolicited, in print or otherwise, whereby our sense of boundless horizons grows apace. But what we are experiencing is not the knowledge explosion so often boasted of; it is a torrent of information, made possible by first reducing the known to compact form and then bulking it up again—adding water. That is why the product so often tastes like dried soup.

It would be an interesting exercise to take a modern handbook at random and retrace the variations of fact and significance along the path from an actual knower to the pemmican of the alphabetized entry in double columns. For this substance is often derived from secondary sources by all-purpose editors; and in the booming of the great data industry it has been forgotten that literal accuracy is no guaranty of truth. Change the context, omit interrelations, modify even slightly the wording, and falsification will probably ensue.

Nowadays this matter of wording is doubly important, because of the state of the language. The habits of thought resulting from science and technology, as well as from the influence of mass communication, have made jargon the spontaneous language of educated people; a few dozen words, replaced from time to time by others like them, stand for the wider vocabulary: with *impact, thrust, interface, context, problem, input, process,* and their kin, a kind of prose is commonly written which seems clear and acceptable, but which in fact fails to delineate the contours or distinguish the aspects of reality.

At the same time, an uneasy feeling attends this loss of the concrete, and it is no paradox that despite the divorce between knowledge and

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information so much has been written recently about words, to help out writers presumably educated and intellectual—the people who do research, publish articles, put together books, and edit the factual Niagara. What may seem strange is that no encouraging result is noticeable. Perhaps this failure is due to the tone and quality of the books themselves. Let us look at a few.

The most Alexandrian of these works deserves first place. It is *The Wordtree* by Henry G. Burger, a quarto of 380 closely packed pages, addressed below its title to a list of some thirty professions and described as "A Transitive Cladistic for Solving Physical and Social Problems."[1]* The compilation is said by the author to serve this purpose by analyzing a quarter-million words "by their processes; [it] branches them binarily to pinpoint the concepts . . . to produce a handbook of physical and social engineering."

How this magic is accomplished, according to the compiler, is through the pairing of ideas with their causes and effects as these are embodied in words. Roget's familiar *Thesaurus* gives only synonyms and associates; the user has to choose among them according to his sense of nuance. In the interlocking vocabulary of *The Wordtree*, the user is guided by the hand toward terms of process and procedure, antonyms and alternatives, and kindred sorts of linkage. Not that this labyrinth is easy to follow. In addition to some fifty abbreviations (rather poorly devised), there are a dozen symbols, whose position or combination signifies connections said to be factual. The rest of the interweaving relies on reference by number from an Index to a Hierarchy. To master the system it is necessary to study fifty pages of explanation.

One can readily see the appeal of the scheme to its maker: words stand for ideas and actions; these have multiple bonds relating them to practical life and speculative thought. Therefore a map of the network, so to speak, could be used to clarify both thought and action. The task of making this map, we are told, took twenty-seven years, and even so some areas in it are "underdeveloped" but being worked on.

With all due respect to this industry and ingenuity, two objections occur at once to the claim of practical utility. One is that a mind capable of threading the maze which is this book would be capable of reaching the same results unaided. The "social engineering" it hopes to facilitate may well begin with clear notions of cause and effect or some other sequence, but that first step presents difficulties only to those who would never be able to use *The Wordtree*.

The second objection is that the "hierarchy" of words and acts is unavoidably full of misfits, because language is not made up of rigid

* The superior numbers refer the reader to the last page of this essay, where citations of the books mentioned are completed.

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prefabricated parts. Its very power to serve thought depends on the flexibility that results from its waywardness. For example, on the very first page of instructions, which is also the endpaper, we are shown the connections of the word *Plan*. Through its first link, *maneuver*, we find the statement that "maneuver *causes* (or at least enables) . . . a pushover or a utopia." A social engineer would surely be ill-advised to maneuver in the expectation of either one.

Since occasional flaws do not discredit a large work, especially in its first edition, it was only fair to test it further. The sampling showed the same dismaying results, together with a surprising unpracticality in the choice of terms. Where is the utility of such verbs as *to superordinate, to readprotect, to julienne, to disembargo, to disgovern, to adjustify, to naphthalize, to semicastrate?* Is this the language of social action—these negatives, compounds, and half measures?

One test of the proffered "cause and effect" was suggested to me by the news that the work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel was now open to view. What does *The Wordtree* offer on *restore?* The first equivalents are: *change and normalize*, followed by a list of words supposedly parallel to *change: "dimpled* (dimp), *fallowed* (barefallow), *galleted* (taliacotify), *healed* (recuperate), *remedied* (therapize), *modernize* (renovize)." This last pair is preceded by a sign that directs us to combine ideas in the form: "*to* change *and also to* modernize means to renovize." Why *renovate* nowhere appears is a mystery, but let it pass. It is these combinings ("binary" to ape computer science) that fatally ruin the scheme. We learn, as a guiding example, that "to maneuver and to govern is to gerrymander." Really, it won't do, any more than *campaign* usefully goes with both *strategy* and *periodize*, the latter being elsewhere linked with (the so far unheard-of) *strategied.*

In short, here is Alexandrianism destroying in its devotee at once the feeling for language and the judgment of practical affairs. One may say this in spite of what Professor Conrad Arensberg, the distinguished Columbia anthropologist, says in his foreword to the book about its being "on the right track, scientifically, historically, and humanistically . . . a contribution to anthropological science and to lexicography itself." Anthropological and humanistic are precisely the qualities that manuals and digests do not possess, some because of their nature—for example a table of logarithms—others, such as this "tree" of notions, because in spite of their humanistic substance, their compilers have handled it like would-be scientists. The product is not even as close to the real thing as the dried soups.

It may seem curious that words should so often excite the interest of persons who have little native gift for using them enjoyably. But it is obvious that words as bare items offer a splendid array to the collector

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and classifier. Not only is there for his purpose no need to regard the aesthetic and psychological aspects of language, but to do so might complicate his operations. The linguists have preached this dogma repeatedly, arguing that theirs was a science and science must deal with objects stripped of individual merit and charm.

True, in the random list of works I referred to earlier as Alexandrian informers, many of those dealing with words make no pretence to original scholarship, much less to "science." They address the general reader and one detects in them the humanist impulse. Their purpose might be described as general hoopla for language. For example, in *Our Marvelous Native Tongue,*[2] *Words, Words, Words,*[3] *Words About Words,*[4] *World of Words,*[5] the laconic *Words,*[6] and Mr. Leo Rosten's *Hooray For Yiddish!,*[7] the authors act as cheerleaders bent on arousing the stolid to share the writers' own enthusiasm.

Some books of this type are history and harangue, others are lists of words "old and new, weird and wonderful, useful and outlandish,"[6] each commented on, some occasionally "enlivened" by a cartoon. The stress is on the colorfulness and lavish variety of language, its irregularities, the former errors now good usage, and the clever new terms and tricks. This tangled forest, we are told, must keep growing; slang is both seed and mulch; change and profusion mean health and vigor—don't you dare prune! Critics of jargon and error are denounced, and Swift is dragged out once again as the classic example of their futility: he reproved *mob!* Ask yourself how we could get along without it. That he warned, like other poets, against adding to the already large number of monosyllables such elegancies as *phizz* and *hipps* is deemed an outrage against laisser-faire.

But this type of book can be done with style and judgment, as is shown by two of the lot—Mrs. Constance Matthews's *Words, Words, Words* and Mr. Rosten's, which he calls "A Book About English." She gives in short compass all that is needed or assimilable by someone in whom the love of words is not native. As in her other works, she writes "plain and pleasant," informs, opines, and does not force the note.[8] Mr. Rosten is more boisterous. His thesis is that Yiddish has contributed both words and turns of phrase to English (at least to American English) and that as readers and writers we should be more aware of this infusion, which has channeled into our speech borrowings from Hebrew, German, and the Slavic languages. He explains and illustrates by historical and fictional anecdotes, of which the second kind is rarely the more entertaining.

Among the humanists there is a subclass, the Improvers. They range from guides to usage (e.g., the late Wilson Follett[9] and the compilers of *The Harper Dictionary of Contemporary Usage*[10]) to the inditers of

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manuals for better writing (the famous Strunk and White,[11] William K. Zinsser,[12] Rudolf Flesch[13]) and the special watchmen, who warn against such dangers as deceptive words, native, British, and foreign. This group of books is very large but again, judging from current writing, mostly without effect. Or perhaps one should say that they help sustain the good writing that is done, though powerless to amend the bad. In any case, one remembers with shame that the great Elizabethan and Augustan writers did not even have dictionaries.

Surely the failure of all this well-meant aid is due in part to its poor quality. The mentors repeat futile advice in chummy tones: "Don't be afraid of rules!" "Write short sentences," as if the difficult craft of brevity were a cure for nonsense and malaprops. These books mislead about diction, too. For example, the large *Dictionary of Euphemisms and Other Doubletalk*[14] blurs nuances right and left, sarcastically pointing out "the truth." Thus "*direct mail:* unsolicited mail or, descending one more notch toward reality, junk mail." Thanks to this hairy-chest attitude we learn that *homicide* is a genteelism for *murder* and *illegal* for *criminal*—as if manslaughter were not also homicide and illegality broader than crime. By the same bent of mind, *document, fatigue, fib, incident, journalist, miscarriage, nurse* (verb), *party* (noun), *portly, questionable, seat belt*, and many other words are declared euphemisms, which the spade-a-spade brigade should replace by more honest terms: the author thinks *upchuck* should be *vomit* and *streetwalker* should be *prostitute.*

No Uncertain Terms sounds as if it had the same intention.[15] Not so; what it urges us to do is distinguish. Pairs and triplets are briefly discussed, with childish drawings to fix our vagrant attention. Here again we encounter the pointless and the erroneous. Who, in ordinary writing, needs to know that *meteor, meteorite,* and *meteoroid* are separate species? And where did the authors find that a *voyage* and a *passage* differed in that the first is good only for a round trip? A few of the fifty-odd entries are useful, the rest trifling or absurd, as when we are told that a monk holds "a clerical position" in the church and a friar is "similar to a monk."

Teachers of Latin have a point when they remind us that an acquaintance with "their" language would help us with ours, but the handbooks so far produced to serve the purpose have been disappointing. The most recent, *Amo, Amas, Amat and More,*[16] is but a collection of Latin tags and maxims, with pronunciation, translation, and a quick comment added. It is supposed to help readers when "plagued by writers and speakers who blithely drop Latin phrases into their English sentences." Why "plagued"? It implies getting rid of the phrases and

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maxims. For the maxims there are better dictionaries than this; for the phrases (*ex officio, ad lib, bona fide*, etc.) almost any English dictionary will do. For the rest, one wonders where the modern reader will stumble on *magister artis ingeniique largitor venter*? As for *ne supra crepidam sutor iudicaret*, the usual form of the proverb among older writers is terser: *ne sutor ultra crepidam;* so the poor reader remains plagued.

He will be misled yet again if he picks up *A Dictionary of Esoteric Words*[17] believing that it will extend his grasp of difficult terms in general use. Leafing through, he will find *Christmas* and *electricity* and be puzzled. "Esoteric" in this title turns out to mean relating (mainly) to oriental theologies. *Dharma, Yoga*, and numerous less familiar words are glossed, side by side with *defensive mechanism* and *worry*—"a habit that has to be practiced for one to become proficient." I am not able to judge how well the truly occult words have been defined, but this last sample is not encouraging, and the editing that let pass "the star *alta centauri*" (for *alpha*), and *caballa* (for *cabbala*), and that accepts *Freemason* as a compound of Egyptian roots is not to be relied on.

On top of poor judgment, works in this category often accost the reader with self-conscious jocularity. Cartoons are added to help say: "Don't let knowledge throw you—take it like the joke it is." Well, let us take *The Transitive Vampire: A Handbook of Grammar for the Innocent, the Eager and the Doomed*, which follows a work on Punctuation similarly addressed.[18] The ploy is to use startling examples to keep the user awake and teach sentence structure. "The damsel with the bedroom eyes is my grandma." Good woodcuts from various sources supply the cartoons by means of grotesque captions: "In her rickety garret, which was crowded with rats, she lay dreaming of biceps and divorce." After raising such mental images, it is tame to be told "Don't split your infinitives" and to find an absolute prohibition of the comma splice.

The menace of foreign words is better taken care of. *Mistakable French* is a first-rate manual, which, without any coy tricks, makes its warnings effective by explaining the false likenesses between French and English words and also by supplying contexts for the use of the French.[19] No such recommendation can be given to *Le Mot Juste*, a compilation by various hands, to cover familiar locutions in French, German, Italian and Spanish, in addition to common Greek and Latin terms and a few more in fifteen other languages, listed as "miscellaneous."[20] Meanings and definitions are frequently faulty: a *Festschrift* is not usually in *commemoration* of a scholar; *bel esprit* is not "a great wit"; *eppur si muove* is not "an exclamation of *frustration*" or *estro poetico* "the imagination of poets"; nor is *ad hominem* an argument "relating to an individual"; on the contrary, it appeals to the listener's humanness; it is not *ad personam*.

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Enough! The pitfalls of British English were well charted a dozen years ago by Mr. Norman Schur in *British Self-Taught;*[21] so well that the excellent text had no need of the cute cartoons doubtless called for by the nervous publisher. The more recent *British/American Language Dictionary* by Norman Moss adds little.[22] It is skimpy, full of perishable slang, and often marred by slips (*Babbit*) and clumsy phrasing (*infiltrated on to*). It fails, moreover, to draw attention to *chat with (to), cater to (for)* and similar divergences, while it blurs distinctions: "Billiards: a kind of pool." Truly, our would-be crutches are broken reeds.

Another reason why so much advice leads to so little bettering is that the cultural current flows not toward the simple and lucid but the other way, toward the novel and singular at any price. The democratic temper is not less pedantic than the Alexandrian. Modern poets and novelists, aided by advertisers, have shown everybody how to tamper with idiom and meaning and be original by rifling the learned vocabulary. When *metaphor* has come into daily use as a bad synonym for *comparison* or for "it reminds me of," one is not surprised to hear that a Senate committee reporting on the CIA thought *synecdoche* would be an apt word for *concealment.* Fortunately, a Washington columnist ridiculed the term out of existence.

But this stroke of sanity is exceptional. The passion for strange new ornaments continues and finds support in what might be called Special Lists. Of course, a solid piece of work such as *A Dictionary of Soldier Talk,* by three army men, is special without catering in the least to novelty hunting; it is a sober, reliable dictionary.[23] But the subtitles of several books in our sampling, like those of *The Transitive Vampire* and of *Words* quoted above, indicate the prevailing mood: "Old, New, and Surprising. For the Styles, Devices, Defects, and Oddities of the Craft of Prose Writing"; "A Baedeker to the Delights of the Written and Spoken Word"; "A Compendium of Curious Expressions and Intriguing Facts."

This last is from *A Browser's Dictionary,* by the late John Ciardi, the poet. With its sequel entitled *A Second,* etc., it is perhaps the best representative of the genre.[24] Nothing like it has appeared since Nare's *Glossary* of early English writers.[25] The *Browsers* sprang in the same way from John Ciardi's wide reading and persistent research. He relishes folk etymologies and the byways of lexicography. He disputes accepted views and gives reminders of curious origins, e.g., *fornicate:* in architecture, *arched,* from *forno* (oven, furnace). The lower arches of large Roman buildings being places of solicitation, their name was attached first to the prostitute (*fornix*), then to the performance itself. Other entries are more speculative but no less interesting—e.g., to knock *galleywest,* which Mark Twain authenticates. Still others, such as the

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derivation of *gunsel* from *gun*, are unconvincing: Dashiell Hammett settled that one long ago as a corruption of *gänsel*, little goose or young homosexual.

We must not forget that the Alexandrian mind wants facts, even when running away from utility to tomfoolery. The big popular biographies are little more than fat bundles of detail that also range from relevant to merely odd; and a striking parallel to the frivolity in books of words occurs among books of facts. In addition to the familiar *World Almanac* and *Guinness Book of World Records*,[26] we have the valuable *What's What*, which gives the name and use of everyday objects.[27] But side by side with these we have, as it were, their antidotes: *The Leslie Frewin Book of Ridiculous Facts*,[28] *The Dictionary of Misinformation*,[29] and *Simons' Book of World Sexual Records*.[30] The ridiculous facts are not all ridiculous, the misinformation is unbelievably slim, and Simons' data are unverifiable, but we take the intention for the deed and are content to have our errors and fantasies at least partly classified.

It was no doubt in the same widdershins spirit that the late Theodore Bernstein, who wrote *The Careful Writer*, compiled with Jane Walker *The Reverse Dictionary*.[31] It enables the writer beset by an inarticulate gleam to find its means of expression. But another group needs help too—the readers of modern literature whose lives are too circumscribed to let them learn by contact the current slang and other creations. Since poetry and novels in Alexandria must be written in the latest demotic speech, there is need all around for *The Barnhart Dictionary of New English Since 1963*[32] and *A Dictionary of Contemporary and Colloquial Usage*.[33] A similar need exists for the several dictionaries of slang, American, English, French, and bilingual for these in pairs.[34]

The rapid turnover of terms in this category suggests that we really ought to have, not a book, but a quarterly, with of course a section at the back for new acronyms and initialese. As it is, the books show how quickly, in these parts of our literature, meaning perishes. They show also how ambiguous it is from the start. This is obvious in naming by initials; it is nearly as bad in slang. For example, *funky* is used to mean *cheap, smelly, generally no good, solid, very good, beautiful.*

Such innovative turns also kill many a straight word: now that *tacky* means *shabby* or *badly made*, the sense *sticky, not quite dry* (as of paint) has been shut out. And confusion spreads further through the now established practice of making verbal mongrels and portmanteaus. The new vocabulary includes such forms as *radiothon* and *puritron* for vulgar use and loftier hybrids for literature. Children may not read Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll any longer, but their word play lives on, and adults who encounter Joyce or his imitators will be glad of Myra Livingston's *Learical Lexicon*.[35] It lists words from Lear's letters to his

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friends, exemplifying all the devices: punning (*phits of coffin*), plain extensions (*begloomed*), portmanteaus (*meloobious*), cockneyisms (*wurble inwentions*) and spelling tricks (*specktickle*). After that, everyone can write a sequel to *Finnegans Wake*—don't be shy: sequels are expected to be inferior.

Slang and nonsense words have but one feature in common: some slang expressions are as amusing as some nonsense; but most are contemptuous and the majority are synonyms for acts of the body—sex, drunkenness, excretion. The latest French-English and English-French dictionary of slang, published by Harrap, is a monument to human inventiveness on these matters, a massive tome that pooled—or rather, drained—the minds of many alert contributors; eighteen are listed, of whom only two are men.[36]

This little sign of the times reminds one that reference works can also serve politics, as the eighteenth-century French encyclopedia was the first to show. The recent revision of Roget's *Thesaurus* to eliminate sex bias from the vocabulary is a less successful attempt to manipulate society through single words.[37] More consecutive, Dennis Baron's *Grammar and Gender* gives an account of the mistreatment of women through language.[38] It is, says he, "a litany of shame," and he discusses the efforts made in our century to invent corrective pronouns and compounds. But he concludes that the English terms at issue have been formed by many influences other than men's biological drive to dominate the other sex. When one learns that some feminists want to replace such words as *history* by *herstory*, one can compliment them on the neat pun but not on their knowledge or prudence. In any case, gender is not sex; one is natural, the other notional. In Latin, sailors and poets are feminine in declension; on the continent of Europe the sun and moon switch gender from one language to another without implications of superior or inferior; in English both are neuter. And in one African language a woman's breast is feminine if small, masculine if large; it would be foolish to draw political conclusions. Let us reach equality and equity on a firmer basis.

The question of knowledge in a welter of "facts" was our concern at the start; it claims attention in a new form at the close. For there is no denying that the defects in the books sampled above were due to poor technique. A professional knows at least what others have written and can borrow from their understanding. The untrained lean, or fall back, rather, on their general education, which—as Stephen Leacock said—is like falling back on a cold frame. Amid the tinkle of broken glass a thought both new and true may be heard, but the chances are against it.

On the other hand, professionalism itself has its drawbacks. To take a

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notable example, the late Eric Partridge, who produced two masterly works, *Origins* (etymologies) and *Slang and Unconventional English*, showed weak judgment throughout his dictionaries of *Clichés* and of *Catch-Phrases*.[39] He mixed up clichés with idioms ("hear a pin drop" with "now and then"), and he misinterpreted phrase after phrase in American writers and the older English—he had not read enough *as a reader*. It is the lexicographer's occupational ailment to become a hardware dealer who tosses nuts and bolts into bins, judging by externals only. Ridden by his "science," he is blind to the art of words and misconceives what he calls the life of language.

Whoever is interested in this cold war between the lexicographer or linguist and the writer or veteran reader should follow the publications of the Dictionary Society of North America, whose center is Indiana State University at Terre Haute. Alexandrian in the best sense, these journals enable one to learn agreeably what is being thought and done about words. One sees the criteria for making dictionaries becoming more and more exacting and abstract; one hears those who develop the rules being pitiless in their arrogance, especially toward writers who believe in right and wrong and who judge by insight and observation instead of "research."

Thus a review of John Ciardi's second *Browser*, dismissed it as "not worth a second look." And when another writer objected to a badly formed and thoroughly misleading new word, a lexicographer jumped on him with the factual bludgeon that "it had been around a long time"—he had found it in a text thirty years ago. For him the empirical truth that it was never heard or read in newspapers until the last few months, as a result of world-wide alarm over an unquestionably new disease, had no bearing on the antiquity, and hence legitimacy, of the word. This mechanical reliance on a datum is mistaken for objectivity. One recalls the large *Webster*, third edition, in which it is said that many educated Americans throughout the country use *ain't* in casual conversation. The evidence, when tracked down, was a research paper that found half-a-dozen such speakers somewhere in the Middle West.

The evolution of dictionaries is thus from simple utility to elaborate ritual. It begins, as we learn from the excellent *History of Foreign Language Dictionaries*,[40] in perplexity about unusual Greek words, no longer understood in the Alexandrian centuries B.C. Latin was similarly charted in Rome's latter days, and again in the Renaissance, as a guide to a foreign tongue. *Dictionaries*, by the noted lexicographer Sidney I. Landau, supplies the matching story of English dictionaries, together with a lucid discussion of the theory behind the latest rules.[41] He laments, for example, that there are no "external criteria" for determining slang. Similarly, the reality of "good usage" (or in linguistic euphe-

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mism "standard English"), which rests on the circular argument that that is good which good users use, ulcerates the whole profession. And it is no doubt this expression of pain that makes the literary think lexicographers do not really know what language is.

Perhaps a post-Alexandrian age will decide that to consider words as objects is science misapplied—it is physics, not biology. Nor is language even purely biological, being distinctively human, not protozoic. Meanwhile, it is enheartening to read the splendid account of the making of the *OED*,[42] *Caught in the Web of Words*, by the granddaughter of its great designer, Sir James Murray.[43] That vast enterprise was largely the work of amateurs, of readers coached and coaxed and bullied by a genius whose publishers, the Oxford Press, did little but badger *him* and dole out meager subsidies. Oxford still thrives on the proceeds of the work, while lexicographers criticize it for not following the rules developed since: expect no justice in Alexandria.

To try to settle the conflict would be foolish as well as futile; it would argue a pathetic ignorance of history, which demonstrates that strife over letter and spirit is unending. Another great Murray, Sir Gilbert, illustrates this truth in his *Religio Grammatici* by quoting the complaint of Isocrates: "The scroll he sends to Philip will not be able to say what he wants it to say, because Philip will hand it to a secretary, and the secretary, neither knowing nor caring what it is all about, will read it out 'with no persuasiveness, no indication of changes of feeling, as if he were giving a list of items.' "[44] Our reference works are lists, and as we turn the page to find the item, Philip's secretary relives in our minds. A close observer might notice a Greek *A* faintly glowing on our foreheads.

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Comes the Revolution You'll Pay the Two Dollars

JACOB A. STEIN

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN, in his January 7, 1986, press conference, was asked some penetrating questions about the budget and its relation to the need for tax increases. His response caught him up in a hopeless tangle of numbers. He disengaged from the entire subject by saying: "So, I'm like that fella in the story. I'm still yellin' 'pay the two dollars.' " The usual commentary that follows each presidential press conference analyzed the implications of every statement. The exegesis that appeared in the *Washington Post* on January 9, 1986, examined the pay-the-two-dollars comment, but it misstated the origin of the phrase. It erroneously ascribed it to Milton Berle and other well-known comedians. There was no mention of Willie Howard.

Willie Howard was, in fact, "that fella in the story" who kept yellin', "pay the two dollars." How regrettable that Willie Howard, who died in 1949, was not alive to hear himself quoted with approval by the President of the United States.

Willie Howard was born in Neustadt, Silesia, on April 13, 1886. Franz Kafka was born rather close by in Prague, Czechoslovakia, just three years earlier. As I will show later, not only were the two born close in time and place, but they were close in the world of ideas.

Shortly after Willie Howard's birth, he and his family settled in Harlem in New York City. When Master Willie was still in short pants, he discovered his fine singing voice. He turned away from school and wandered the streets of New York singing for pennies in the cap. Those people taken with his voice probably failed to notice the darting movement of the eyes, the tilt of the head, the hunch of the shoulders, and the odd look of world weariness assumed by one so young. There was within him an almost incommunicable sense of humor that was seeking expression.

In the book *From Ragtime to Swingtime* (1939), Willie Howard's first professional singing contract is reproduced. It was signed when he was five years old. It obligated Master Willie to perform his singing for a period of one year at the direction of John Leffler, a theatrical manager.

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Leffler agreed to pay Willie five dollars a week. The contract had this unique provision: "It is also agreed that in the event of the sudden changing, or breaking of the voice of the said Willie Howard, this contract becomes null and void."

Willie Howard and John Leffler renewed the contract from year to year until Willie, at age fourteen, suffered a reversal in his career. John Leffler arranged with Harry Von Tilzer, a songwriter and publisher, for Willie to attend vaudeville performances at Proctor's Theatre in Harlem. Willie's job was to spring suddenly up from the balcony seat and somewhat spontaneously sing the chorus of the Von Tilzer song that the performer on stage had just sung.

Harry Von Tilzer's career is part of the early history of American popular music. His real name was Harry Gumm. He adopted the name Von Tilzer for its continental tone. He turned out to be a songwriting prodigy. Among his many hits were "A Bird in a Gilded Cage" and "Wait 'till the Sun Shines Nellie." His younger brother, Albert Von Tilzer, wrote "Take Me Out to the Ball Game." One of Harry Von Tilzer's songs, "On a Sunday Afternoon," sold, in one day in a New York department store, ten thousand copies. Von Tilzer wrote both the words and the music of waltzes, ballads, and comic songs. Irving Berlin, another prodigy, not only got his start in Von Tilzer's office, but he also got Von Tilzer to publish one of his first songs. Von Tilzer published George Gershwin's very first song, called "When You Want 'Em, You Can't Get 'Em, When You Get 'Em, You Don't Want 'Em."

An event in Von Tilzer's office in the early 1900s is given as the source of the words "Tin Pan Alley." It was Von Tilzer's custom to weave strips of newspaper through the strings of his old upright piano. This produced a tinny, mandolin-like effect. Monroe H. Rosenfeld, a frequent visitor to Von Tilzer's office, was not only a composer but also a newspaper writer always in quest of material. He had just finished an article about the music business and was casting about for a title. Von Tilzer happened to sit down and strum a tune on the trick piano. "I have it. There's my name!" exclaimed Rosenfeld. "Your piano sounds exactly like a Tin Pan. I'll call the article, 'Tin Pan Alley!'"

One afternoon Flo Ziegfeld, then a young theatrical producer, saw Willie's performance of a Von Tilzer song. Ziegfeld's public persona at that time consisted of his posturing as a dandy and a gambler. Ziegfeld's mature style as the affluent impresario is unflatteringly described in Ring Lardner's short story "The Love Nest." Ziegfeld's early credit standing rested entirely on the fact that he was Anna Held's husband. Anna Held was a wasp-waisted beauty who became an international sensation singing "I Just Can't Make My Eyes Behave." Ziegfeld "discovered" her in France. He knew that if he could get her to this

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country he would have a valuable theatrical property. In those days, diamonds represented the theatrical manager's financial statement. Ziegfeld re-pawned his jewelry and cabled fifteen hundred dollars to Miss Held. She was so flattered by the gesture that she came to New York and placed herself under Mr. Ziegfeld's exclusive management. He then contrived what at the time was a fabulous publicity stunt. He delivered to Miss Held's hotel suite each day huge milk cans. He circulated the story that Miss Held's astonishing beauty was preserved by constant milk baths.

Ziegfeld thought Willie Howard's balcony performance would make a nice addition to Miss Held's presentation. He hired Master Willie to perform in his usual spontaneous way during Miss Held's appearance at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C. At the first performance, Anna Held sang a chorus of a song called "Mollie Shannon." When Willie rose on cue, he experienced, in the words of his contract, a "sudden changing, or breaking of the voice." His contract with Leffler was by its own terms "null and void." Ziegfeld fired him on the spot. Ziegfeld said he had hired a boy soprano who was now a basso.

When Willie Howard returned to New York, he found friends who encouraged him to forget his days as a boy singer and explore other opportunities. He soon discovered that the sad, strange look, which had gone unnoticed when he sang, had a comic quality. It created instant sympathy. He formed a team with his older brother, Eugene, and they worked up a comedy vaudeville act.

Their success in vaudeville is certified by a clipping dated September 23, 1911, from the *New York Star*. Willie was then only fifteen. It stated: "There are few offerings that are more popular with vaudeville audiences than the act of Eugene and Willie Howard. These two young men have scored a remarkable success wherever they have played. They possess fine singing voices and their comedy dialogue never fails to score heavily. This week the clever team is proving one of the notable hits of the fine bill at the Bushwick Theatre, Brooklyn. Howard and Howard have received many offers to go into musical comedy but for the present they intend to stick to the two a day houses." The article was accompanied by a picture of Willie Howard in formal attire, wearing a white bow tie and sporting a watch chain dangling from his left coat lapel, very much in the style of the times.

By the year 1912 Willie and Eugene Howard were vaudeville headliners earning $450 a week. They had performed in all the famous vaudeville houses both here and in Europe. In the space of a few years, America performed its miracle for them. Immigrant waifs were transformed into stars.

Willie and Eugene Howard were now ready to try their luck in a

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Broadway revue. The Shuberts included them in Shubert's *Passing Show of 1912*, which opened on July 22. It ran 136 performances. The appearance in *The Passing Show* stabilized Willie Howard's fame as a star performer. Thereafter, until 1948, there was hardly a season without Willie Howard appearing in a Broadway show in which he received star billing and star money.

Fred Allen, who appeared in one of Willie Howard's shows, says in *Much Ado About Me* that Willie "was a fine comedian, an accomplished dramatic actor, an excellent singer, and a versatile mimic."

In his long Broadway career, Willie Howard mainly appeared in short comedy sketches. Included was the sketch that became known as "Pay the Two Dollars." He first performed it in George White's *Scandals of 1931*. The show was unforgettable both for the music and the performers. The music was by Lou Brown and Ray Henderson. Ray Bolger was the featured dancer. Rudy Vallee sang "Life Is Just a Bowl of Cherries." Willie Howard joined Rudy in the final chorus. The original idea for the sketch was given to Willie Howard by Finley Peter Dunne, Jr., the son of the humorous writer who originated the Mister Dooley stories. An experienced sketch writer, Billy K. Wells, wrote the dialogue along with Willie.

The sketch commences on a New York subway. Willie plays the sad, inoffensive city toiler whose instincts tell him that the safe life consists of hard work coupled with the good luck not to become known by the authorities. He is with a friend who is a lawyer. This lawyer's personality demands that he challenge authority. He is intransigent and anarchistic. An argument arises between the two. Willie, in an excess of emotion, spits on the floor. The subway conductor directs Willie's attention to the sign which declares that there is a two-dollar fine for spitting on the subway. Willie wishes to pay the two dollars and withdraw into anonymity. His lawyer friend sees this as an opportunity. He must not permit his client to submit to authority. It is a matter of principle. There follows an escalation of penalties as the lawyer explores each appellate level. At every step Willie Howard pleads, "Let's pay the two dollars." He knows, with the peasant's perception, that the enforcement of the law is always in the right hands. But the lawyer is obsessed with vindication.

When Willie is sentenced finally to death, the lawyer directs his unabated energies toward obtaining a governor's pardon. Here he is successful. As they return home on the subway, Willie denounces the lawyer for destroying his life. He becomes worked up again and inadvertently spits on the subway. Blackout and curtain.

Despair is a major theme of twentieth-century literature. It is Franz Kafka's major theme. Kafka's characters are so poisoned by the bureaucratic secretion that they believe any governmental horror is not only

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possible but likely. This includes standing trial for crimes that are never disclosed. Any questions the defendant may have are referred to remote functionaries whose existence is only suggested and whose authority is subordinate to other more remote functionaries. The lawyer in Willie Howard's sketch makes the same mistake that Kafka's characters make. He believes that more resolution of purpose or more ingenuity will penetrate the obstruction and free the defendant. It is the nightmare become real.

The handy symbol of all this is the ticket. It may be a traffic ticket, or it may be the ticket for spitting on a subway. A challenge requires entry into the bureaucratic process. It consumes time and money. It feeds on confusion and misunderstanding. It is dangerous. The alternative is to submit and "pay the two dollars."

Willie Howard's familiarity with urban vulnerability came to him naturally as a 1930s walker in the city of New York. Kafka learned urban vulnerability in a different school. He was a claims examiner for the Workers Accident Insurance Company for the Kingdom of Bohemia in Prague, Czechoslovakia, Poric Strasse 7. He worked there from 1908 until his retirement in 1922. Most of those who have studied minutely all aspects of Kafka's life have failed to appreciate the full effect that his work in an insurance company's claims department had on Kafka's view of life. Every claim file is the same. It contains papers held in place by a brass clip. The first document in the file identifies the injured employee, the claimant, and describes in summary form the accident that produced the injury.

Of course, there is conflict between the employer's view of the case and that of the injured employee. The conflicts appear in the description of the accident and in the nature of the injury. Witness affidavits support each adversary's allegation. Medical reports either corroborate or discredit the worker's claim of injury. The worker is never seen in person. He has been transformed by paper magic into a file number, and his future depends on his file.

It was Kafka's burden to evaluate thousands of such files where the employee's assertions must be weighed against those of the employer. The files were piled on the floor, on chairs, on desks, and on windowsills. All tied with a red ribbon. There was never enough information in any of Kafka's files. Kafka, in order to do justice to both the employer and the employee, always needed more information. More medical reports and more witness statements might provide the decisive bit of evidence.

Kafka saw the process as both the insider and the outsider. He was consumed with guilt because he knew that until he made a decision, the injured employee was without funds. Every day's mail brought packets of letters importuning him for the decisive action he was incapable of

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taking. Kafka's letters to Felice demonstrate his inability to decide anything if there were competing points of view. Kafka was himself the faceless clerk that he saw as symbolic of the process which was without compassion and which demanded its tithe. Alan Bennett, in his play *The Insurance Man,* seeks to show that Kafka's *The Trial* was inspired by his work with the insurance company. In the play, life is portrayed as a process of repetitive injury and injustice.

Willie and Eugene Howard followed up their success with "Pay the Two Dollars" the very next year with another Broadway revue, *Ballyhoo of 1932.* It was in *Ballyhoo* that Willie Howard repeats his confrontation with the Zeitgeist. He used a short sketch that opened with his appearance on a soapbox near Columbus Circle in New York City. He is a 1930s radical calling for fellow workers to join him in the attack on the injustices of capitalism. He exhorts each passerby to "rewolt." Only one specimen of the rabble pauses to be roused.

From time to time as the sketch was redone, the lonely member of the rabble was Al Kelly, *né* Kalisch, one of Willie Howard's great discoveries. Kelly was gifted in the art of intentional double-talk. He said very important things, controversial things, with emphasis, emotion, and gesture, but what was it that he said? He loved to tell how he once posed as a doctor at a medical meeting. He announced to his audience that he had been "able to rehabilitate patients by daily injections of triprobe and framis into the right differnarium which tranclucentizes the stolane producing a black greal which enables you to stame the clob." Notice the use of the word *framis.* Al Kelly used it so frequently that the word itself came to mean double-talk. John Ciardi, in *A Browser's Dictionary,* said that the word (or rather the non-word) *framis* appeared frequently in comic routines and then "as Pinocchio turned into a real boy, *framis* turned into a real word by biting off its own comic nose and becoming a label for what it once was."

As the sketch unfolds, Willie Howard declares that it is the capitalists who have silks and satins. It is the capitalists who eat strawberries and cream, extra heavy cream. At this point, Al Kelly becomes enraged and declares, with raised fist, "But I don't like strawberries and cream." Willie Howard replies: "So you don't like strawberries and cream? A little too sweet for you, was it? Well, comes the revolution, you muzzler, you'll eat strawberries and cream."

Now, a few interesting coincidences. Al Kelly strongly resembled, in appearance and aggressiveness, Arthur Koestler. He was short like Koestler. He had a full head of steely gray hair low on the forehead like Koestler. He had the skeptical expression of Koestler. The "Comes the revolution . . ." sketch first appeared the same year Koestler gained admittance to the Communist party in Berlin, Germany—1932.

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Koestler commenced his intellectual journey as a true believer that the common man, oppressed as he is by forces over which he has no control—the Kafkaesque—must "rewolt" against the oppressor and join hands with fellow sufferers. No doubt Koestler repeated many times in the several languages he spoke "Comes the revolution. . . ." This joining of hands as the first step in the march toward Utopia was given the name Dawnism by Hugh Kingsmill. At dawn, men of goodwill shall join together. By noon, they are fighting about principle. By evening, the majority, those in brief authority, find they can stifle dissent only through force. Tyranny replaces tyranny. Kingsmill submitted this view:

> Most of the avoidable suffering in life springs from our attempts to escape the unavoidable suffering inherent in the fragmentary nature of our present existence. We expect immortal satisfactions from mortal conditions, and lasting and perfect happiness in the midst of universal change. To encourage this expectation, to persuade mankind that the ideal is realisable in this world, after a few preliminary changes in external conditions, is the distinguishing mark of all charlatans, whether in thought or action. In the middle of the eighteenth century Johnson wrote: "We will not endeavor to fix the destiny of kingdoms: it is our business to consider what beings like us may perform." A little later Rousseau wrote: "Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains." Johnson's sober truth kindled no one, Rousseau's seductive lie founded the secular religion which in various forms has dominated Europe since Rousseau's death.

Arthur Koestler's life tracked Dawnism. Communism for him was the alternative to Fascism. It offered a quick corrective to human nature's defects through politics. His experience in the Spanish Civil War taught him that Communism, as other forms of zealotry, survives only through despotism. He turned on his god that failed with the same energy he had devoted to his evangelism of the opiate of the materialists.

Koestler, once free of the dialectic, wrote with great insight on many difficult subjects. He was strangely attracted to the subject of humor—strangely, because he was quite humorless.

Koestler wrote the article on humor for the *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*. It is unfortunate that Koestler did not consult with Willie Howard beforehand. Things would have come off much better if he had. As it is, Koestler's comment on humor has its own unconscious humor. It reads like Al Kelly was the ghost in the machine that stated: "The sudden clash between these two mutually exclusive codes of rules—or associative context, or cognative holons—produces the comic effect. It compels us to perceive the situation in two self-consistent but incompatible frames of reference at the same time; it makes us function simultaneously on two different wave-lengths. While this unusual condition lasts, the event is not, as is normally the case, associated with a single frame of reference, but bisociated with two."

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The only thing missing is a framis or two.

Koestler returned to an academic examination of humor in his book *Act of Creation*. He fails to solve the mystery of humor, as Freud fails, as Max Eastman fails, and as Bergson fails. All fail because the analysis of humor is as different from humor as lightning is from a lightning bug. The authors supply no answer to two key questions. If the author knows so much about humor, why isn't he funny at will, and why is it that people who repeatedly coin those funny one-liners know nothing of the science of humor?

By 1935, Willie Howard's truly creative period was over. By then he had an inventory of sketches he could draw upon as he needed. He required no new material. His audience would rather see him act out the old familiar routines than be surprised by something new. His working life consisted of arriving at the theater at seven o'clock in the evening and performing his fifteen-minute sketch in the first act of the revue and his ten-minute sketch in the second act. His life continued in this pattern year after year until shortly before his death. Although he appeared in movies and was an occasional radio performer, he had no real wish for a wider celebrity than he had.

A retrospective study of his comic technique reveals that it was based largely on satire combined with the sudden superb swoop into nonsense. His sketch "French Taught in a Hurry" illustrates this. He first appears as a pretentious French academic instructing in French by speaking English in a most elegant French accent. Nevertheless, there are unexpected lapses into Yiddish and belligerent declarations concerning the primary importance of the student's paying tuition right on time, and any delay will be met with the relentless pursuit of the debtor in the "true French tradition."

He used his satiric gifts in his impersonations of Al Jolson, George Jessel, and Eddie Cantor. He first established an entirely accurate imitation of the singing style of each. Then, through bathos, he ridiculed their sentimentality.

Willie Howard's habitually grave expression was well suited to the delivery of wisecracks. I last saw Willie Howard perform in a revue called *Priorities of 1942*. In that show, he ended a short colloquy with a characteristic wisecrack. He was on stage with a singer who called herself simply the Incomparable Hildegard. Willie Howard turned to her and said, in his abrupt manner, "Hildegard, what is it that you do?"

She replied, "When I was eighteen years old my father gave me $20,000 to go to Europe and study voice with the best teachers."

"Well, that's quite something, isn't it? We'd all like to hear you sing."

With that, the pit orchestra started up, and the Incomparable Hildegard sang. When she had completed her elaborate performance, Willie

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jabbed her in the ribs with his elbow and whispered in a conspiratorial tone, "Honey, what did you do with all that money?"

The dictionary definition conveys little about the word *wisecrack*, defining it as a jocular smart remark, a jest. We need a broader definition to convey all that flashes off a good wisecrack. It sparkles with cynical city wisdom. The wisecrack is the perfect medium for expression of New York City's values. The city worshiped success, and Willie Howard had achieved success in the only terms his constituency understood. He had money, fame, and the ability to disparage by wisecrack any alternative value system. Another wisecracker, Damon Runyon, summed up the matter when he said that the fight is not always to the strong nor the race to the swift, but that is the way to bet them. New Yorkers are Darwinians.

The attempt to describe how and why an entertainer is funny must fail. It does no good to declaim about the genius of Chaplin, Keaton, Fields, and others. Their films are there to see, but their tricks are twice-told tales and a statute of limitations runs against them. The comedian's humor ages rapidly. Yesterday's comic routines are no longer consistently humorous. They are much like old family photographs. Time renders them naive. Fashions change.

The only humor that defies time is found in literature, where humor assists in understanding the utter strangeness and the unpredictability of human existence. An example is Gogol's short story "The Overcoat." It contains no jokes. It does contain the unforgettable character, Akaky Akakievitch. He is the long-suffering petty clerk, abused by all, who has sweet revenge when he returns after death to avenge the theft of his overcoat by stealing the overcoats of his tormentors. It is a story that does not go out of style. Willie Howard, at his best, conveyed the message and appeal of the Akakievitch spirit.

Murray Schumach, of the *New York Times*, wrote an extended article about Willie Howard that appeared on May 2, 1948. It was entitled "Willie Howard—the World's His Straight Man." Here is Mr. Schumach's description of Willie Howard a year before his death: "Away from the footlights Willie is morose in the grand manner of a punished deity—or maybe a small boy. Lines of wood cut intensity border his long upper lip, furrow his forehead and pinch the skin around his melancholy eyes. People seeing him under these circumstances feel sorry for him." It is the face of Akaky Akakievitch. Schumach says that behind the tragic facade Willie Howard was plotting farcical episodes to spring on friends and audiences—a Pagliacci in reverse.

Willie Howard lived to see his two epigrammatic reflections on the human condition become popular catchphrases. "Pay the two dollars" and "Comes the revolution . . . " were as useful as subway tokens to a cynical New Yorker during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Strange that

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Bartlett preserved neither in the protective amber of his anthology of quotations. Despite this, they remain alive. "Pay the two dollars" found its way into the dialogue of the 1959 Hitchcock movie *North by Northwest*. Cary Grant, charged with drunk driving and other crimes, professes innocence. His mother, Jessie Royce Landis, disgusted over it all, advises, "Pay the two dollars." Of course the cream of the jest was when "Pay the two dollars" suddenly injected itself into the presidential press conference. It is just too useful a concept to disappear entirely. It continues to intrude at the most unexpected times and places, much like the ghost of Akaky Akakievitch as it grabs an overcoat off the back of an astonished senior office manager of a very important government bureau.

Tourists from Florida Reach New Mexico

(for an elderly aunt)

LARRY RUBIN

That day in summer we got stuck atop
Mt. Capulin, we did not know about altitude's
Effect on carburetors, their need for oxygen.
But we learned. Later, in town, the wind
Blew cottonwood feathers; we thought it snow.
Sure enough, we saw the snow atop
The foremost Rocky range, fluted, silver
Spread raggedly, as with a butter knife.
Now your oxygen machine stands by
Your bed, and the tube winds like
The road to Capulin; once more we're short
Of breath, and far off, I think, you see the snow.

LARRY RUBIN teaches English at the Georgia Institute of Technology. His most recent book of poems is *All My Mirrors Lie*, and his work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Poetry*, and other journals.

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Cygnus Musicus

DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

Note the scale of tones that flies from a brass bugle
and, trusting that Nature creates nothing in vain,
compare the horn's shape to the windpipe of a swan,
that snaky tube of bony rings. You see
the bird's instrument is altogether equal
to playing the music praised in antiquity:
those plaintive strains, a cello-like requiem
murmuring through the reeds its prophetic sigh
as death waves the swan toward asylum where
no one may hear him sing, no other bird
break up the sacrament of his dying hymn.

Also in the windless glow of a sea-beach
they sing before sunrise, says Oppian.
Pythagoras was so moved he began to teach
that the poet's soul in death becomes a swan
so his divine harmony will not be lost.
One night before Plato came to Socrates
the sage dreamed a swan hid in his breast;
and hours from execution the swan sounded
to him like a joyous prophecy of the Good
waiting for us there in the next kingdom,
and not some hyperbole of bestial dread.

Now it seems the swan's melodic gift is fading
or one must be dead to hear it. I have stood
long hours by lakes and estuarine rivers
and recall only a stridulous braying, though none
of my subjects was ever summoned by death
the singing master. I will go on straining
my ears in the twilight between hope and dread
I shall catch that mythic descant of the swan,
out of my senses at last to hear the singing,
like a father who hears the voice of his lost son,
that supreme fantasia, the soul's returning.

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Teaching at a Provincial Chinese University

GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ

On February 27, 1984, I arrived at the Peking airport, accompanied by my wife and our two college-aged daughters. We were on our way to Baoding, where we would spend a semester teaching at Hebei University. We were greeted at the airport by four people. One of them had been a student of mine in America. I already knew that he spoke English gracefully and fluently. Another was a young man who was to be our translator for the next five months. I was surprised at his easy command of English and his natural-sounding American pronunciation. "Where in America did you study?" I asked him after I had known him for about three minutes. "I have never left China" was his reply.

My translator had been an undergraduate English major at Hebei University and had graduated in 1983. He had studied English in high school for one year before entering college. If he had learned to speak English so well at college, clearly Hebei University was doing something right.

A few days later, my family and I arrived in Baoding. It is a hundred miles—and a hundred years—from Peking. We loved it the minute we saw it. We were delighted when we arrived there, and we were heartbroken the day we left. I still don't understand why we were so fond of Baoding. It is an old, industrial city with a population of about four hundred thousand. It has no sewers, and the contents of its cesspools are frequently emptied and pulled down the streets in "honey wagons" to the fields outside the city, where they are used as fertilizer. The sidewalks, once you are out of the central part of the city, are unpaved.

Houses in the old parts of town are generally one-story dwellings made of brick. A horizontal red stripe, about two inches thick, is painted on the walls at a height of about three feet above the ground. Below this stripe, the houses are painted white; above it, they are unpainted or painted gray. There are lots of trees, mostly poplars. Like the houses, they are painted white at the bottom until the level of the red stripe, which is painted not only on houses and trees but on blank walls. In the newer parts of town, the buildings are four-story, red-brick apartment houses with lots of balconies. Both the older and newer sections of the city tend to be drab, but this in no way diminished our fondness of Baoding.

We loved Baoding because we were happy there, and the principal reason for our happiness was our students. They did not all speak as well as our translator—some of them were rather shy about using English—but most of them were able to speak and understand English without much difficulty. Since I had attempted, without much success, to learn Chinese, I respected their command of English. One of the things I most wanted to learn about Hebei University was its method of teaching English.

Hebei University started with one great advantage—its enthusiastic, curious, earnest, hardworking students. My own students fell into two groups. I taught one section of young teachers and two sections of juniors. The young teachers included some graduate students, but most of them were simply full-time faculty members. A Young Teacher at Hebei University seems to be a rank equivalent in American universities to Instructor. The young teachers had bachelors degrees in English, some of them from Hebei University (Chinese universities do not fear inbreeding). The young teachers took my course, Introduction to Linguistics. They were obviously

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bright, quite fluent in English (with some exceptions), and active in class.

My juniors, on the other hand, were extremely shy. The percentage of fluent English speakers was much lower than among the young teachers, which was not surprising. I taught them a course entitled Transformational Grammar. They asked no questions in class, and I wondered if they understood anything at all. I was not sure why they would be studying transformational grammar either. But whenever I asked a student to diagram a sentence on the blackboard, it was correctly done. My juniors did extremely well on their midterm and final exams—better than the young teachers, better than my graduate students in America. They just took to the subject. They had already studied traditional grammar, and terms like *transitive* and *countable noun* were part of their active vocabularies. I have frequently had students in the United States who complained that transformational grammar was mystifying or meaningless, but my Chinese students found it child's play. There is, no doubt, some cultural explanation for this difference, but I wouldn't know where to begin to look for it.

The juniors, like all university students in China, had been admitted to college by competitive examination. They had chosen their majors before they arrived on campus. In China, students simply do not apply to a college, but to a department in that college. There were two sections of juniors majoring in English at Hebei University in the spring of 1984, each with twenty-two students. The sections had been together since the students entered college in 1981. Each section had its own personality—Section 1 was happy-go-lucky; Section 2 was serious.

College in China, as in the United States, takes four years to complete. Chinese undergraduates tend to be about the same age as their American counterparts. Beyond that, there are not many similarities between the two systems.

Students in China practically own their classrooms. All subjects in their major fields are taught in their classrooms. The teachers move from room to room; the students take their classes in the same place. They often choose to eat in their classrooms, study there, and even hold parties there. Section 2 had a tape recorder, which was often played in the ten-minute break between classes. Students are also in charge of keeping their rooms clean. There was a banner in Section 2's room. I asked about it and learned that it had been awarded to the most civilized class. I inquired about the definition of *civilized* and was told that Section 2 had received this honor for keeping its class neat and for academic and political excellence. Political excellence means patriotism and attendance at political meetings.

Each student had a wooden desk with a shelf. The desks looked more like library carrels than like desks in an elementary school; they were nothing like the tablet armchairs that are standard in the United States. The students sat on four-legged wooden stools. They didn't look especially comfortable, but many of the students preferred to spend most of their unscheduled time in their classes. There weren't too many other choices. The library wasn't very big, and the students didn't have access to the stacks. There were no chairs in the dining hall. And in the dorms, there were six or seven students to a room.

The English majors all live in dormitories on the South Campus of Hebei University. One day I asked one of my students to invite me into his dorm room. It had four double-decker beds, although only six students lived there—the remaining beds were used for storage. There was no sink, but there was a schedule on the wall to show which student brought the hot water on which day. (I think the students in that particular room were a bit more organized than most.) In the corridors there were missing light bulbs and a generally dingy look.

All students are entitled to space in the dormitories. I knew a student (not an English major) whose parents lived in a faculty apartment house on campus. Although he already lived at Hebei University, he was given space in the dorms. He preferred to live with his classmates even though he had a room of his own in his parents' apartment. When finals came around, however, he went home to study. Dorm rooms are free for undergraduates, as is tuition. Meals in the various dining halls are very cheap. There are six dining halls—five for students and one for faculty. The one I visited had tables but no chairs. One of the dining rooms is for the forty or so

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Moslem students who attend the school. I was impressed that this respect for Islamic dietary laws exists in a Communist country. It is hard to imagine a kosher dining room at an American university attended by no more than forty Jewish students.

When the weather is not too extreme, some students prefer to study outdoors. We frequently saw students walking around campus, especially in the early-morning hours, reading from their textbooks or repeating English words and sentences to themselves. The campus had lots of trees and flowers, but no lawns. There are not many places to sit down. So if students want to study outdoors on nice days, they do it standing up.

By and large, however, classrooms seem to be the preferred location for studying. The area in front of the building that houses the Foreign Language Department is the favorite location for just hanging out. The English majors all know each other very well. Their roommates are also their section-mates. They take almost identical programs. There are almost no electives, although the students may choose French, Russian, or Japanese as their second foreign language. The lack of electives is not pedagogically desirable, but it makes scheduling very easy. Classes are never over- or under-enrolled. When I wanted to go to Peking for a long weekend, it was extremely easy to reschedule my Friday class. All I had to do was meet one student in the section—any student—and tell him of my plans. We would find a time convenient for both of us, then he would inform his classmates. When I arrived at the newly scheduled time, the whole class would be there. I never ceased to be amazed that this was possible. But when students have identical schedules and no part-time jobs, one can be quite flexible about when to hold one's class.

English majors at Hebei University take between twenty and thirty hours of classes a week. Classes begin at 8:00 A.M. There is a two-hour break starting at noon for lunch and *xiuxi* (rest). After May Day, there is a kind of daylight saving time: classes begin at 7:30 A.M. and there is a three-hour *xiuxi*. On Saturday there are morning classes, but in the afternoon students attend political meetings. Some of the foreign experts had gone to see political meetings, but we never did. We felt our presence would have altered the nature of the meeting. One student, however, told my wife that political meetings were like church. When she asked how, he answered, "They are very boring."

Except for courses in Chinese language and literature, world history, Marxism, and a second foreign language, English majors take nothing but English courses. They never study math or science. In their first three years, they take courses in intensive reading, extensive reading, and grammar. In their senior years, they study literary history and spend the last three months of the semester writing their senior theses.

Intensive reading is an unpopular course, among both faculty and students, although some of the students consider it extremely useful. It is a course in reading and explicating short passages. Class discussion focuses on words and their meanings in context, on using the right terms, on phrasal verbs, and on sentence patterns. The readings increase in difficulty and length from the freshman to the junior year. There are teacher's editions of the texts for the instructors to use, and faculty members spend a lot of time preparing for the course.

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is introduced in this course. This means, in effect, that students must learn a second new alphabet to study English. But most of them do learn it. I discovered that the students' knowledge of IPA was a tool I could make frequent use of. I found it much easier to talk about pronunciation if I could also write the IPA symbol on the blackboard. It is not very easy to hear distinctions one doesn't make in one's own language. I had an analogous experience learning Chinese. I was never quite sure of the tone of a new Chinese word until I asked and was told the answer. I have one quarrel with the way IPA was used to teach pronunciation: the students were taught that the difference between the vowels in *pitch* and *peach* is one of length, which is not quite the case. *Bid* and *pill* were habitually mispronounced as *bead* and *peel*. Another frequent problem was the word *usually*, which sounded to me like *urually*. This has nothing to do with the choice of phonetic transcriptions but rather reflects the fact that the Chinese language has no consonant sound quite like the *s* in *usual* or *pleasure*.

Extensive Reading tended to be a more

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popular course than Intensive Reading. In the first year, students read simplified versions of English and American works of literature. In the second year, they move on to newspapers and magazines. In the third year, they read original novels, plays, and scientific books. Class discussion, as in Intensive Reading, is about grammar and the meanings of words. The main purposes of the course are to increase vocabulary and to familiarize the students with major works of literature.

Grammar is taught in the fourth and fifth semesters. It is taught traditionally, with many exercises. Formal grammar does not exist in a vacuum, however. There are composition and conversation courses. There is also a sound lab, where students may go to listen to English. There was another pedagogic tool that I hadn't expected to find—Voice of America. In addition to its regular programs, Voice of America broadcasts the news in "special English." Special English is English, spoken a bit more slowly than most people speak it, and with a somewhat restricted vocabulary. Nevertheless, special English is normal, good English. Voice of America is doing countless students in many countries a great service with these broadcasts. I hadn't known that students in China were able to listen to Voice of America openly, but they are. Not only that, but there was a large blackboard just inside the entrance to the Foreign Language Department building (which we and the other American family always called the *Wai Wen Xi*, which means "Foreign Language Department," even though most of us didn't speak Chinese) on which was written in English the daily news stories that the seniors had just heard on Voice of America.

Another way for the students to read English was to read *China Daily*, an English-language newspaper published by the Chinese government. *China Daily* was distributed free to the seniors and to the Americans. It is not a bad paper; it is quite different from the English-language programs broadcast by Radio Moscow that we picked up on our short-wave radios. Radio Moscow was heavy-handed propaganda; *China Daily* is primarily a newspaper and not a propaganda sheet. But the best way for English majors to practice their English was to talk to us—the foreign experts.

There are ordinarily two American and two Japanese families residing at Hebei University when school is in session. These four families live in a faculty-residence building on the South Campus, not very far from the *Wai Wen Xi*. The faculty building is a four-story, red-brick apartment house with balconies, looking like many other buildings in Baoding, both on and off campus. It has several entrances, each leading to a hall and stairway serving a group of eight apartments—two to a floor. Our own entrance led to a section reserved for the Foreign Affairs Office, which was in charge of taking care of us. Four of the eight apartments were for us, the foreign experts and our families. One was where our translators and waiters lived. Two were used for offices. The eighth apartment, on the ground floor, was the Foreign Experts' Dining Room—the best Chinese restaurant in the world.

English majors heard us, the foreign experts, teach them in class. They asked us questions during the ten-minute break between classes (very few undergraduates asked questions during class). They could chat with us in front of the *Wai Wen Xi*. They sometimes wrote their senior theses under our direction. A few of them went for long walks with us. Many of them came to visit us in our apartments, which also served as our offices. Some became our friends. But many, perhaps the majority, had only limited dealings with us. Chinese students are often quite shy, and the students who got to know us best were necessarily the least shy.

Shyness is always a problem for those learning to speak a foreign language. In China, the problem was aggravated by a practice that I was most unpleasantly surprised to discover—students laughed at each other's mistakes. Until I went to China I hadn't noticed that at American universities no one ever laughs at mistakes, unless the mistake is irresistibly funny. Our teachers in the first and second grades taught us not to snicker at the errors of others. Chinese people are typically extremely polite and considerate. Americans, on the other hand, know that to err is human. Our society's tolerance for error, I suspect, is one of the secrets of its wealth and productivity, but that is an issue I will have to explore elsewhere.

Majoring in English combines the formal study of grammar and vocabulary with the opportunity to hear, read, and speak English.

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But something is missing—writing. For the first three years, students do not get much practice in putting their thoughts on paper in English. Then in their senior year, they have to write a twenty- or thirty-page senior thesis.

An English major is expected to achieve proficiency in five areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. A translation course is taken by the seniors, but I had no particular occasion to judge the abilities of the students in this area. My feeling about listening, speaking, and reading is that the program of studies offered at Hebei University succeeded admirably. I cannot say the same for writing. Writing is very hard, even for native speakers. Errors show up in writing much more obviously than they do in speaking. Ungrammatical, un-idiomatic, and badly expressed sentences cannot be made clear by facial expressions or intonation. Moreover, content has to be logical and developed; writers must learn to think long thoughts. So I was not very surprised that my seniors wrote theses that needed a great deal of revision. What I was unprepared for was that they had no experience and little ability in writing about literature. Nor did they know how to begin writing what in America we call a term paper.

I guided a total of fourteen senior theses, which was a great many. I was assigned the students who chose to write about one of the following five novels: *Gone with the Wind, The Scarlet Letter, An American Tragedy, Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jane Eyre*. Except for *Gone with the Wind*, which is very long and which I had read three times before, I read or reread these novels once I knew my students would be writing about them. I had expected before I went to China that some of my thesis advisees would choose to write about linguistics, but none did.

With two or three exceptions, the theses expressed the same basic idea: the novel illustrates the cruelty and hypocrisy of capitalist society. In the case of *An American Tragedy*, this was obviously true; however, this analysis seemed quite inappropriate for *The Scarlet Letter*, where society is cruel and hypocritical, but not capitalist. My students waxed indignant in their theses about how harshly Hester Prynne was punished in *The Scarlet Letter*. This struck me as odd, since China today is at least as puritanical as Puritan New England was. After a bit of questioning, my advisees admitted that they thought Hester deserved what she got.

With the exception of *An American Tragedy*, the novels my students wrote about had women as their central figures. The theses praised these women as independent thinkers and revolutionaries. I found the analyses of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* utterly unpersuasive. The essays on *Jane Eyre* were better, and the best thesis of all was on *Gone with the Wind*, which lends itself quite well to a good Marxist reading. The student who wrote this paper, Miss Wang (the names of my students could be divided into five roughly equal groups: Mr. Zhang, Miss Zhang, Mr. Wang, Miss Wang, and other), supported her arguments with many well-chosen illustrations from the text. I personally consider independent thinking a virtue nurtured by bourgeois societies, not Marxist ones; nevertheless, a good paper is a good paper.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles is another work that one might think lends itself to Marxist analysis; however, the theses on *Tess* were universally poor. The political statements in the essays were thrown around at random and not applied to the novel. I did not expect my students to agree with my own views. Why should they? But I was disappointed at the automatic, thoughtless way they incorporated Marxism into their writing. Perhaps they felt they had to follow the party line and simply made sure they did so. But I think there was another factor at work. The students had not had any practice in talking about literature or in writing about it in term papers. The classroom experience that most prepared them to talk about anything came in their courses in Marxism.

The ideological nature of the essays was not a problem, however. The greatest difficulty I faced was in dealing with plagiarism. To a certain extent, this occurred because the students had not been taught to use quotation notes and footnotes. That was an innocent error, easily corrected. On the other hand, most of my advisees were quite frightened about how to go about writing their theses, and in a few cases resorted to wholesale copying. In one case, two students had identical paragraphs scattered through their papers. They had obviously copied from a common source. I pointed this out to them and crossed out the offending material, telling them it

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could not be used. One of the two replaced the plagiarized sections with her own writing; the other asked to be transferred to a Chinese thesis advisor. He explained that he and I had irreconcilable ideological differences.

I found China an extremely honest society, and I think the plagiarism was an aberration caused by the fact that the students had not been prepared to write a long essay and to use secondary sources. Despite all my complaints about the theses, guiding them was the best—albeit the hardest—part of my teaching at Hebei University. It was my chance to work on an individual basis with students. It meant that there were students in my apartment every evening, which was one of the most pleasurable and instructive aspects of my experience in China (despite the fact that the evening was the only time we had hot water for showers). All in all, I think that the writing of these papers was an important and useful experience for the students. While I was not quite pleased with the results, I nevertheless respected the accomplishment of the students in producing these long essays in a foreign language about material they did not know how to write about. I don't think I could have done as well under comparable circumstances.

In order for the senior theses to be really good, China would have to be a different kind of society, one in which free classroom discussion and independent thinking were encouraged. Yet, despite the timidity of my students in class and the party line found in the senior papers, people were quite frank in talking to me. Guests in our apartment said things I hadn't ever expected to hear in China. One guest began a conversation with the words, "Before Liberation, when we were free." It was the most effectively pro-Communist thing anybody ever said to me in China, because it showed that the speaker could say it and get away with it.

The most unpleasant impression I had of Communism was made when my family and I were walking in downtown Peking with a friend. Two shabby-looking young men came by and asked my friend a question. He excused himself a moment, walked a bit ahead of us, and showed the young men his identification. When our friend rejoined us, he tried to avoid talking about the incident, but after repeated questions, he conceded that the shabby young men were plainclothes policemen. He conjectured that they were concerned about foreigners being approached by passersby who wanted to change money and thus would give a bad impression of China. I assured my friend that the plainclothes cops could not have done anything to make a worse impression on foreigners. The next day the same friend was asked to identify himself when he entered the lobby of the Peking Hotel with us. Chinese people are not permitted to walk into hotels frequented by foreigners unless they have business there. At first I was extremely angry about this. Then I realized that China might be paying us a compliment: this fear of letting Chinese people fraternize freely with foreigners is an attempt to keep them ignorant of how good life can be elsewhere and therefore an admission that the West is better.

After a few months in China, I came to the conclusion that the purpose of Communism is to teach people to believe in Communism. Students are required to take a Marxist course each year (Party History, Philosophy, Economics, and a senior course that may vary). Billboards and slogans are everywhere: two quotations by Chairman Mao flank the entrance to the North Campus of Hebei University; the neon letters on top of the department store in Baoding say "Long Live the Chinese Communist Party"; there are big pictures of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin (Stalin!!!) in the catalog room of the library. But actions speak louder than words. China plasters its cities with billboards and slogans, which few people pay any attention to, but it also does something much more significant—it invites foreign experts to teach its young people. It is true that visitors from off campus were not supposed to come to our apartment. But students could talk to us at great length, and did. Seniors were required to visit us. Had we not been inclined to talk politics with them, their theses would have raised the issue automatically. I not only taught classes, which by their nature were apolitical, but I also gave two public lectures. One was on the history of the Jews, the other on Western classical music. Both were well attended, especially the first—a lecture on the Jews, during which I made a few negative remarks about Marx's early work "On the Jewish Question." The incident with the plainclothes police happened only once, but I spoke to Chinese

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people every day. If the police episode was an indirect admission of respect to Western institutions, my daily presence in Baoding was a direct and much greater compliment to the West and what it stands for.

China is changing. A major event happened while we were there. In 1984, around the beginning of June, dancing was legalized. The foreign-language majors held a dance in the *Wai Wen Xi*. The whole university was invited, but only foreign-language majors and their teachers showed up. It was generally accepted that the foreign-language majors were more liberated than the other students. Within the next few days, dance studios opened in downtown Baoding. A month later, Hebei University held a senior prom. This was really a remarkable event. Many Chinese consider dancing the first step on the road to sex, the greatest danger posed by the opening to the West. Nevertheless, this time seniors from every department in the school attended. The dances were waltzes, fox-trots, tangos, and a Chinese step I had not seen before. Older members of the faculty and staff knew these dances, but, surprisingly, so did some of the students and young teachers. Apparently, private dancing has been going on in people's apartments during the years it was not permitted publicly.

Before the legalization of dancing, quite a few students asked me whether I danced much in the United States. I told them that I was not much of a dancer. They were evidently disappointed. When the dances were held, I felt under enormous pressure to get on the floor and dance. After all, there I was, from the land of dancing. I did my best, but that was not enough. By not being a good dancer, I felt I had failed in my obligation to the Hebei University community.

I am reasonably sure that dancing has not led to sex. I don't think I ever saw a boy and girl hold hands on campus. I never saw anyone kiss in Baoding, although I once saw it in Tiananmen Square in Peking. Undergraduates may not get married. If there were any romantic attachments among the students, no one ever mentioned anything about them to me. Classes are coeducational, and the English majors are divided equally between the sexes, but there were no obvious examples of couples who were especially friendly. Chinese society is extremely traditional. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), millions of families were broken up in China's mad attempt to punish "class enemies." Today China has made enormous steps in the direction of personal freedom; nevertheless, husbands and wives are frequently separated because they are assigned jobs in different cities. The Chinese family has survived despite the occurrence of enforced, prolonged separations. It will survive dancing.

China wants to be prosperous and powerful; that is why it is becoming freer. Chairman Mao and the Red Guards were interested only in ideological purity, so they acted rationally and closed the universities. Today's China wants technology. Technology depends upon knowledge, and all knowledge is interrelated. English is an important language, and it can be taught better by native speakers and by Chinese teachers who were taught by native speakers.

The teaching of English at Hebei University is successful because it is not ideological. Where it becomes ideological, it is less successful, as shown by the senior theses. Language teaching in America is certainly less successful than in China, partly because we Americans can get away without having to study a foreign language, but partly because we tend to be too ideological ourselves. We language teachers have too many axes to grind. We are either committed to the teaching of grammar formally or we are opposed to it. We may be committed to never using English in a language class. We may feel it is our duty to fight the students' desire for grammatical rules. My own experience in studying Chinese leads me to believe that flexibility and a variety of approaches, including the study of formal grammar, are necessary with learners who are no longer children.

I was happy at Hebei University for a variety of reasons, one of which was that the educational process was succeeding. I was happy in Baoding despite its backwardness, in part because I always was aware that things were improving. I learned to love China and its people, partly because of China's faith in the future. There are three things I would like to see America adopt from China: seriousness, belief in progress, and a law against tipping. And there are three things that I think China should learn about from America: bathrooms, telephones, and freedom.

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First Ladies

LEWIS L. GOULD

The perennial American fascination with First Ladies has recently given signs of achieving a new level of intensity. In 1982 a poll of scholars rated all the presidential wives for the first time, just as their husbands have been periodically evaluated. Eleanor Roosevelt, Abigail Adams, and Lady Bird Johnson led the list, in that order. Two years later, in April 1984, a conference at the Gerald R. Ford Museum, sponsored by Betty Ford, examined "Modern First Ladies: Private Lives and Public Duties." Media coverage was lavish, with dozens of national reporters and the major networks in attendance. Rosalynn Carter's autobiography, *First Lady from Plains,* outsold Jimmy Carter's memoirs and became the leading best-seller in paperback. By the summer of 1985, Nancy Reagan received an hour of prime-time attention when NBC ran a special on "The First Lady: Nancy Reagan," which described her triumph over the early criticism of her stylish and expensive way of life. Fred Barnes in the *New Republic* credited her with "one of the greatest political turnarounds in modern times."

Popular curiosity about First Ladies—and analysis of their performance—is, of course, a continuing aspect of American life. In August 1861, the *Chicago Tribune* complained about the way rival newspapers were treating Mary Todd Lincoln. "If Mrs. Lincoln were a prize fighter, a foreign danseuse or a condemned convict on the way to execution, she could not be treated more indecently than she is by a portion of the New York press." Lucy Webb Hayes, the first woman to be called First Lady, received letters regularly from the public that asked her among other things to discuss polygamy or to allow séances to be conducted at the White House. Grover Cleveland experienced the insatiable lust for gossip about presidents and their wives when, while in the White House, in 1886, he married Frances Folsom. Wherever President Cleveland appeared during the engagement, bands played the wedding march, and one enthusiastic conductor had his musicians strike up "He's Going to Marry Yum-Yum." Mary Roberts Rinehart summed up in 1929 an enduring national attitude toward First Ladies: "We insist, and succeed, in knowing what they wear, when and where they go to church, who is present at the official White House functions, and any small and intimate details possible to obtain."

Despite the long tradition of First Lady watching, efforts to understand this singularly American institution in its historical context have been rare. Journalists and pundits write about each new president and his wife as if there were few previous examples with which to compare accomplishments and style. An NBC producer described Mrs. Reagan's relationship as counselor and adviser to the president as "unique," without any recognition that Edith Roosevelt, Helen Taft, and Bess Truman were all closer to their husbands than Mrs. Reagan on personnel and policy decisions. More important, almost no efforts have been made to determine why First Ladies captivate the public or to measure the ways in which the relationship between these women and the American people has evolved in this century.

That First Ladies have emerged since 1900 as public figures in their own right is a cliché often repeated in the small body of literature about them. The real issue is the quality of their participation in national affairs. Treating them in a feminist context is unproductive

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because over the years they have so well reflected and exemplified middle-class family values. To characterize First Ladies as partners or surrogates of the president conveys only a part of the truth. They are best understood as a variety of political celebrity, and the complexities of their situation arise from the imperatives and constraints that accompany stardom and celebrity status in American society.

Before the turn of this century, presidential wives attracted only a modest amount of press attention and an intermittent flow of correspondence from individuals seeking influence or an audience. They were passive figures who did not respond to these requests for assistance or espouse good causes. Frances Folsom Cleveland, for example, remained in the background for her husband's second term in the mid-1890s, while Ida McKinley was an epileptic recluse whose illness kept her away from public scrutiny.

Popular interest in the president and his family quickened after 1900. Theodore Roosevelt's ebullient personality contributed to the new involvement with the occupants of the White House, but deeper causes were also in operation. The spread of mass-circulation magazines, the growth of the motion picture, and the emergence of human interest journalism laid the basis for what Richard Schickel has called "the culture of celebrity." First Ladies became natural objects of curiosity and hence of press coverage. They were, as Daniel Boorstin has said about celebrities generally, well known for being well-known. The absence of any clearly defined role for presidential wives, the possibility that they exercised some private influence on their husbands, and their place as symbols of how women should behave made them the object of the same kind of media attention that surrounded actresses, sports figures, and society women.

The continuing question for all First Ladies has been how to come to terms with this unrelenting attention—"having every move watched and covered and considered news," in the words of Lady Bird Johnson. Some women have found the demands of celebrity status beyond their strength and the pressures too great. Helen Taft, Ellen Wilson, and Florence Harding suffered debilitating health problems in the White House; and Mamie Eisenhower, Patricia Nixon, and Betty Ford showed the strain as well.

For the most part, however, modern First Ladies have developed the means to gratify or accommodate what a biographer of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis calls "the squeezing paw of the public." In the first thirty years of this century, journalistic techniques and practices remained tentative and unsophisticated. Edith Roosevelt, Grace Coolidge, and Lou Henry Hoover explored some of the possibilities that were open to a presidential wife to find a place for herself as a public personality, but Edith Wilson's example provided a cautionary warning about a First Lady who brushed too close to substance.

While Edith Roosevelt enjoyed the confidence of her husband on matters of appointments and probably influenced policy during their daily walks in the White House gardens, it was her position as a symbol of what American women should be that represented her most important public role. To meet those duties, Mrs. Roosevelt employed a social secretary, Isabelle Hagner, to arrange her schedule, respond to the flow of mail, and answer the invitations that came to the wife of a charismatic president. Hagner's appointment marked the initial recognition that a First Lady needed a staff to carry on her responsibilities as a figure of public interest.

Under the Roosevelts, the White House became "the recognized leader of Washington official society." Edith Roosevelt first asserted her cultural preeminence through regular weekly meetings of Cabinet wives, which resulted in what one reporter called "several wise reformations" in social affairs. The First Lady also gave evening musicales in the winter with artists selected by the Steinway Piano Company. On other occasions, afternoon teas brought together prominent strangers visiting the city on business and members of the city's political and social elite. "I know the great veneration the American people have for the office of the Presidency," Mrs. Roosevelt said, "and I feel that, as far as possible, they should meet their Chief Executive and see the way in which he lives." Mrs. Roosevelt made these remarks to a reporter doing a story on her "social duties," which was itself a further departure from the private wall that had previously separated First Ladies from the public. Mrs. Roosevelt never flouted the social code

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that kept First Ladies out of public view, but she found ways that a president's wife might use her fame to make the White House a force in what an aide to Theodore Roosevelt called "the moral social life of America."

Although she lacked any of Mrs. Roosevelt's influence on her husband's policy decisions, Grace Coolidge capitalized on the public's curiosity about her activities as a patron of culture and friend of the famous in the 1920s. Photogenic and well-dressed, Mrs. Coolidge became a favorite of the press as a contrast to her dour and distant husband. A full schedule of receptions and musicales brought the celebrated and talented to the White House, among them Douglas Fairbanks, John Barrymore, and Sergei Rachmaninoff. But it was Mrs. Coolidge herself who was, in Will Rogers's words, "chuck plumb full of magnetism." When Broadway stars gathered on the White House lawn to campaign for President Coolidge in 1924, the First Lady broke into the campaign song "Keep Cool with Coolidge." Calvin Coolidge may have forbade her to make any statements, speak on the radio, or smoke in public, but at the same time he knew that a glamorous and attractive First Lady added an aura of sophistication and fun to an otherwise austere administration.

Even such an apparently reclusive woman as Lou Henry Hoover was actually more in the public gaze than her reputation would indicate. She made a number of nationwide radio broadcasts, and was available to the press informally on her trips, while asserting each time that she gave no interviews. The size of her personal staff grew to three secretaries to cope with the increase in mail that her expanded public activities evoked. Through the difficult months of the Depression, Mrs. Hoover used appearances before the Girl Scouts—her favorite personal cause—to advance her husband's views of self-reliance and individual energy as solutions to the economic crisis. These initiatives received less attention from the press than did journalistic efforts to secure facts about the Hoovers' private life. The journalist Bess Furman, then a youthful Washington reporter, dressed in a Girl Scout uniform in 1930 and joined a troop of girls who were to sing Christmas carols at the White House. It was easier to treat the First Lady as a celebrity in this way than to grant her a substantive role.

Other First Ladies in the early 1900s also tried to balance the demands of fame with impulses to be a larger force in the lives of their husbands. Helen Taft had what she termed "a lively interest" in William Howard Taft's political career. After inducing him to run for president in 1908, she advised him on Cabinet appointments and diplomatic nominations. Her public visibility, however, caused troubles in the transition period and in the early weeks of her husband's administration. Mrs. Taft expressed the desire, even before her husband took over from Theodore Roosevelt, to redecorate the White House and make changes in the staff. The resulting friction with the Roosevelts contributed to the feud that, in turn, led to disaster for the Republicans in 1912. At the inauguration in March 1909, in a break with precedent, she insisted on riding back with President Taft from the ceremonies. Mrs. Taft complained, in a testimony to her status as a celebrity appendage to her husband's position: "The reason I do not enjoy accompanying Mr. Taft on trips is just for this: He is taken in charge by committees and escorted everywhere with honor, while I am usually sent with a lot of uninteresting women through some side street to wait for him at some tea or luncheon." Had Mrs. Taft not suffered a crippling illness in the spring of 1909, her energy and sense of her own position would have tested the limits of what First Ladies might do as public figures.

Illness also limited the influence of Florence Harding and Ellen Wilson as First Ladies, but their brief stays in the White House disclose how presidential wives both responded to public attention and sought to evoke it. Mrs. Harding threw open the White House mansion to the people after the long exclusion during World War I and Woodrow Wilson's illness. She met tourists personally and once greeted a contingent of Girl Scouts in a Girl Scout uniform of her own. After a long bout with ill health in 1922, she invited women reporters to tea to see how she had recovered. This effort to quell apprehension about Mrs. Harding's health reflected the news value that a celebrity-conscious press assigned to the intimate details of White House life.

Woodrow Wilson's first wife, Ellen Axson Wilson, might seem an improbable candidate for celebrity status. In her seventeen months

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in Washington, she avoided direct publicity, but she and her husband managed to make their social presence known through other means. Giving frugality and economy as their reasons, the Wilsons declined to hold an inaugural ball in 1913, and the First Lady also let it be known that she spent under a thousand dollars a year on clothes. The Wilsons matched this "Democratic simplicity" with numerous disclosures about their family activities that consistently had news coverage. "One gets tired of seeing, hearing, and talking Wilsons," wrote a congressional wife. "They are more before the public than any other White House family I have known." The interest, in 1912–13, in Mrs. Wilson's talents as a landscape painter, which she quietly encouraged, owed as much to her new prominence as First Lady as to the quality of her art. She used her public visibility to advocate a law to clean up Washington's disease-infested and overcrowded alleys. Congress passed the measure just before her death in partial recognition that the popularity of a First Lady could give her an influence on questions of public policy.

Edith Bolling Wilson, who married the president in December 1915, achieved a different kind of notoriety when her husband suffered a disabling stroke in October 1919. Historians still call her a "President-in-fact" who, in James Reston's words, assumed Wilson's "Presidential responsibilities." These judgments overstate the extent of Mrs. Wilson's influence from late 1919 to March 4, 1921. But the First Lady controlled who saw President Wilson in the negotiations over Senate ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, and she had a large influence upon her husband in his dealings with such former advisers as Edward M. House and Secretary of State Robert Lansing. Most important, she refused to counsel Wilson to resign, and she made sure that the public did not learn the truth about his health. As a result, the nation had no real president for more than a year. Edith Wilson's experience diminished the role of the First Lady by underscoring, in the political memory of Washington, the potential risks of a presidential wife who sought to participate in the substantive aspects of an administration.

Before 1933, none of the First Ladies had exploited fully the possibilities inherent in the celebrity status of the institution. Edith Roosevelt had guided public attitudes while Grace Coolidge had fallen in with the rhythms of the age of ballyhoo. Individual elements had been tested—Lou Hoover's radio addresses, Helen Taft's political advice, and Ellen Wilson's support for legislation—yet no one of these women had captured the national imagination and made of the First Lady an independent political and cultural force. For the most part, the routine of a president's wife remained "one long procession of tea parties" amid a public that craved to see First Ladies "to know how they look and speak and what they wear."

When Eleanor Roosevelt came to the White House, the First Lady blossomed as a national celebrity in ways that permanently altered the expectations for presidential wives who followed her. The greater press and public attention on her derived to some degree from the hard economic times that directed interest on the president and his family. Mrs. Roosevelt's own agenda of civil rights for blacks, the condition of rural residents and the nation's youth, and the needs of American women also drew press coverage to her activities. Because of the strains within the Roosevelt marriage arising from the Lucy Mercer episode and the president's paralysis, Mrs. Roosevelt had served as her husband's surrogate and as an independent public figure even before the 1932 election.

More than any previous First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt cultivated public curiosity in her role as presidential wife between 1933 and 1945. Like her uncle Theodore, she had an instinct for the limelight and an innate sense of how to foster attention in ways that served her own ends. Watching Mrs. Roosevelt at an Easter egg roll on the White House lawn in April 1934, one of the employees noted, "She isn't satisfied just to stay in a sheltered place and wave at the people; she pushes her way right into the crowd and shakes hands with all she can." Denied the services of a staff in the White House, she employed her own devices to get her message across to the public, and she drew friends and relatives into an entourage that functioned for her as press agents and gofers did for stars and sports figures.

The regular press conferences with women reporters, which she began upon coming to Washington, were an essential aspect of Elea-

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nor Roosevelt's process of publicizing herself. In a male-dominated world of Washington journalism, Eleanor Roosevelt insisted that only women reporters could attend these sessions. Participants had a chance at choice news stories that their male counterparts could not acquire. Some of the reporters who attended these sessions protected the First Lady from tough questions and took potentially embarrassing answers off the record. As members of Mrs. Roosevelt's Press Conference Association, they had as much at stake as she did in maintaining this relationship, and the interdependence of celebrity and media helped her to shape her own public image.

Mrs. Roosevelt also grasped the news opportunities in the position that previous First Ladies had not developed. She had no need of a press secretary because she did the job so well herself. She understood, as one reporter put it, that "the American people must make a carnival around their First Lady," and that her travels and appearances would be newsworthy in themselves. Eleanor Roosevelt gave journalists in profusion what a later generation would call "photo opportunities." "She is one who motors herself about as a lady Haroun-al-Raschid, and sees at first hand how life goes on," concluded one exhausted reporter after covering Mrs. Roosevelt's travels. In her husband's first term, Mrs. Roosevelt became "America's Most Traveled First Lady" as the nation, "unaccustomed to First Ladies darting about, watched her with mingled admiration and alarm."

Eleanor Roosevelt did not limit herself to the passive role of news source. She turned the curiosity about her into a lever that brought offers of writing assignments in newspapers, magazines, and books. She began as editor of a publication, *Babies—Just Babies*, and then wrote an advice column for *Women's Home Companion* that was called "I Want You to Write Me." When the magazine ended her column, she began her daily public diary "My Day" in December 1935 for United Feature Syndicate. Criticism from Republicans emphasized the money she earned from these endeavors, but, in fact, she gave most of it to charitable organizations after paying taxes on the income from her work. What her broadcasts, lecture tours, and writing did was to give her an independent forum to state her ideas outside of her husband's control. When Mrs. Roosevelt's autobiography, *This Is My Story*, appeared in serial form in *Ladies Home Journal*, she informed the publishers: "I can't tell you what it means to me to have this wonderful recognition for something I have done myself not on account of Franklin's position."

As she became a national celebrity in the 1930s, Eleanor Roosevelt experienced the mixed blessings of notoriety. There were the letters that poured in to the White House, the "fan mail" as the reporters termed it, with their unending pleas for financial help, intercession with government agencies as a kind of ombudswoman, or just for advice on personal problems. Her travels attracted crowds, she said, "for some strange reason," and she had to learn how to deal with life under constant scrutiny. "I couldn't see a thing," wrote one employee of Mrs. Roosevelt's when she visited the World's Fair in 1939, "because I was so busy trying to keep people who asked for autographs away from Mrs. R, as she doesn't give autographs in public." Lorena Hickok, whose romantic relationship with the First Lady had faltered because of Mrs. Roosevelt's commitment to her hectic life, observed in 1940 that her friend was becoming a "personage" who had the double existence in private and public that characterizes the famous in American society.

Popularity gave Eleanor Roosevelt the ability to pursue the causes in which she believed and to find new responsibilities for presidential wives. The good that she did for the unfortunate, the salutary example that she provided on civil rights, and the effectiveness of her place as gadfly to the New Deal all have been appropriately chronicled. She was less successful in channeling her prodigious energies into constructive and coherent programs of action. Her instinctive response to the people she met as a public figure was to involve them in her life, with resulting distractions that added further complications to an already overburdened schedule. Mrs. Roosevelt believed in work, and as First Lady she accomplished much. That the record of her life in the White House added up more to inspiring anecdotes and luminous episodes than a legacy of programmatic change owed a great deal to her decision to be the celebrity as First Lady.

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The two First Ladies who followed Eleanor Roosevelt muted the aspects of the institution that fueled public interest. Bess Truman told friends that she was not "going down in any coal mines," and she gave no interviews, held no press conferences, and limited her public appearances. This retreat from notoriety accorded with Mrs. Truman's own feelings, and it enabled her to play a large role in her husband's decisions in private. Both Trumans also realized that there were political advantages in distancing her from Eleanor Roosevelt's example. "Mrs. Truman has been a great tonic for that very large segment of the population who got good and tired of her predecessor climbing flagpoles, scrambling down into zinc mines, and turning a dollar wherever she could by cashing in on her White House connections," wrote a columnist in a Lubbock, Texas, newspaper in 1951—remarks that left President Truman "deeply touched." Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower had no ambition to sway her husband on substantive questions, and a chronic illness limited her commitments while in the White House. "She was very much against pushing forward into public view," Dwight Eisenhower said after he left the presidency.

The three years that Jacqueline Kennedy spent as First Lady took the institution beyond the status of celebrity and into the even more alluring venue of international stardom. The legacy that Mrs. Kennedy left to her successors was an image of beauty, culture, and good taste that no woman could easily match. A Maine high-school history teacher said of Lady Bird Johnson in 1967, "What she suffers from is having had to follow a goddess." The components of Mrs. Kennedy's aura as First Lady arose first from her personal allure and her experience in the White House, "the mystical nimbus of tragedy and beauty" that, for many people, she has never lost. Added to it were the dazzling parties and artistic occasions that she and President Kennedy sponsored. Her advocacy of the restoration and renewal of the White House mansion in the style of the early nineteenth-century United States enhanced the impression of gentility and elegance that she chose to convey.

More ambivalence surrounded Mrs. Kennedy's approach to her duties than would be evident twenty-five years later. She learned from her father how to captivate admirers by giving less of herself than appearances suggested. Like other celebrities, she recognized that she must accommodate the public's interest in her while maintaining an acute sense of privacy and reserve. She told the woman who dealt with journalists for her that her relations with the newspaper women who covered the White House would be "minimum information given with maximum politeness." She called these reporters "the harpies," who at receptions should "be held at bay by Presidential aides holding bayonets."

When it suited Mrs. Kennedy, she could be very visible and seemingly accessible. Her televised tour of the White House in February 1962 was a triumph in the ratings and with the critics. Similarly, her travels with President Kennedy or by herself received an ecstatic response in the United States and overseas. But when she chafed at the ceremonial duties of a presidential wife, then she simply did not do them. Lady Bird Johnson, who often stood in for her, became known as Washington's "number one pinch hitter." Helen Thomas caught something of Mrs. Kennedy's celebrity style in her memoirs: "When she was creating the image of a concerned First Lady, she wanted press coverage. When she was flying off on her Friday-to-Tuesday weekend trips, she wanted to pull the velvet curtain closed."

Beyond restoration of the White House and a general appreciation of the arts, Mrs. Kennedy pursued no programs and mobilized no constituencies. This accorded with her dislike of politics and kept a distance from a husband whose infidelities continued even when he was in the presidency. Before they ended in national tragedy and mourning, her years as First Lady were a succession of glittering public moments where the limelight hid the personal complexity of her private life.

None of the women who followed Mrs. Kennedy has tried to equal her standing as a media figure and public star. Lady Bird Johnson was most successful in finding ways to pursue her own priorities as First Lady and in turning the mechanisms of celebrity to her advantage. Coming from a background in the television business and years as an observer of politics, she understood the necessity to provide the press and the electorate with news about what the president's wife did. Mrs. Johnson named Liz Carpenter as her

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press secretary and had another staff member with responsibility for television appearances. Mrs. Johnson intended to use the fame that surrounded her to achieve substantive policy objectives, and she drew the press into coverage of her campaign between 1965 and 1969 to beautify Washington and the nation.

Working with such wealthy benefactors as Mary Lasker, Katharine Graham, and Brooke Astor, Mrs. Johnson oversaw the planting of flowers and shrubs to change the public face of Washington. Nationally, beautification consisted of visible occasions where trees were planted and parks dedicated. In less publicized ways, she supported the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, worked to improve the inner city of the nation's capital, and encouraged policies that contributed to the emergence of the ecological movement in the early 1970s. By choosing a subject that suited the ceremonial character of her position and evoked a strongly positive citizen response, Mrs. Johnson garnered for herself the chance to function out of the national spotlight as a de facto presidential aide.

Celebrity proved less malleable for Patricia Nixon, Betty Ford, and Rosalynn Carter. Mrs. Nixon considered carrying on beautification in 1969, but that and other projects were abandoned in favor of an ill-defined endorsement of "voluntarism." Never comfortable with the personal side of politics and campaigning, Mrs. Nixon preferred to greet tourists in the White House and pursue redecoration of the mansion. That her renovating work rivaled that of Mrs. Kennedy was little known because of her personal reticence and the distance of the press from the Nixon presidency. When Watergate broke, the strain of events drove Mrs. Nixon into virtual seclusion by 1974.

Betty Ford was the darling of the celebrity process and also its victim during her White House years. Candor and frankness on social issues made her a favorite of the press and interviewers as a champion of the Equal Rights Amendment and the 1973 Supreme Court decision on abortion. To some extent, media interest in her derived from the contrast between what was felt to be her own cultural tolerance and the more conservative posture of the Ford White House. The sudden onslaught of public attention, combined with her own health problems and the assassination attempts on her husband, tested her emotional resilience and contributed to her dependencies on pills and alcohol that became public knowledge after she left Washington. Despite these difficulties, Mrs. Ford fit rather comfortably into the role of First Lady as a symbolic and ceremonial American wife and mother.

Rosalynn Carter wanted more out of being First Lady than the institution could give. While she adjusted to the side of her position that operated in public, she sought to be an activist presidential partner and surrogate. This assertion of her influence aroused animosity from reporters and citizens. What was a "Steel Magnolia" doing in Cabinet meetings where men, and perhaps a token woman or two, discussed substance and issues? Mrs. Carter acted in the vein of Eleanor Roosevelt but lacked that earlier First Lady's instinct for the right public gesture. She tried to be as constructive as Lady Bird Johnson, only to find that mental health evoked gloom and grimness instead of the warm feelings that natural beauty had summoned. Mrs. Carter thought that a First Lady could call the nation to duty. She learned instead that the public wanted diversion rather than moral instruction from the president's wife.

The enduring power of celebrity as a way of defining First Ladies revealed itself again in the case of Nancy Reagan. When her expensive manner of living clashed with her husband's economic policies in 1981–82, the task for her advisers and media counselors became how to transform the negative popular image of the president's wife into high approval ratings. To establish her credibility as First Lady, she turned to the instruments of entertainment. She made an appearance on a situation comedy, "Diff'rent Strokes," on behalf of her campaign against drug abuse, and began to be interviewed on talk shows. The key to her success, however, was the parody that she performed at the Washington Gridiron dinner in early 1982. When Mrs. Reagan sang "Secondhand Clothes" wearing a skirt with safety pins, a white feather boa, and a feathered hat, she received a standing ovation from the reporters who agreed that her willingness to make fun of herself in a performance had testified to her authenticity as First Lady.

From then on Mrs. Reagan received more

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favorable coverage and the media treated her anti-drug campaign with greater seriousness. Until the historical record of the Reagan presidency is available, a judgment on the quality of Mrs. Reagan's effect on the drug problem is premature. The visible side of her program consists to a large degree of occasions where her fame draws attention to the issue with schoolchildren, parents, and First Ladies from other countries in attendance. Mrs. Reagan's activism is both conservative in its avoidance of government action and not very threatening because it appears no one is to blame for the spread of drug abuse. The cause she espouses is more in the nature of a celebrity public-service announcement than an assault on a serious social problem.

Writers on First Ladies always confront the question of triviality. Are these women worth studying and have they had any effect on American history? Their influence on their husbands as wives, mothers, and political partners properly belongs to the field of presidential biography. Historians and political scientists have not devoted much attention to this aspect of the presidency, but there are indications that the balance is shifting, as in the case of recent work on Woodrow Wilson and his wives and the intense fascination with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

What about the position of First Lady itself? To what degree does it represent a legitimate subject of inquiry? Or, is it simply a matter of ceremony and a cause of gossip? Ceremony and gossip have surrounded presidential wives throughout American history. The treatment of First Ladies as celebrities in this century has only been a way of assessing the place of these women in the politics of the country. The nation is not altogether comfortable with the idea of autonomous, self-reliant women, and it is comforting to have a cultural symbol of femininity who fulfills the stereotypes of what women should be and do.

Being a First Lady, then, requires a woman to act, if she would succeed, as a mixture of queen, club woman, and starlet. Subject to unrelenting attention, expected to behave impeccably in every situation, and criticized from some quarter for substantive assertion, the wife of a president has all the perquisites of stardom and the rewards of fame. What she is denied is genuine importance as an individual. Celebrity is a trivializing process, and for First Ladies that is the central point of their position. They live on display. While their cage is gilded, their freedom remains severely limited.

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The Fifth Opinion

THOMAS NIEMAN

What is one to do when faced with the prospect of complicated major surgery? This is a question fate recently posed for me. Three previous knee operations—only two of which I regarded as successful—had not so much embittered me as left me wary and determined to find answers to some simple questions before accepting my doctor's recommendation for yet another operation. What I needed to know was: Exactly what surgery had to be performed? Was it truly necessary? How would it help? Who was best fit to do it? Simple as these questions may seem, finding clear answers to them turned out to be a good deal less than easy—so much less that I found myself soliciting fully five surgical opinions before deciding what to do.

My knee problems had begun when I was eleven or twelve. The local orthopedist (as far as I know, there were only one or two in the small Illinois town in which I grew up) referred me to a specialist in Iowa. My local orthopedist was a friend of the family, and my parents accepted his recommendation without question. They trusted their friend and—by extension—his judgment, which is something people do every day without giving it another thought. That is the way my parents chose my first orthopedic specialist. He did eventually operate on my right knee, but with disappointing results. The disappointment was that exactly a year later I needed surgery again. So the search for an orthopedist began once more.

Two visits to the nearest teaching hospital, which was in Iowa City, Iowa, and which enjoyed a considerable local reputation, also proved unsatisfactory, so my parents sought the advice of another family friend. This one was an ear, nose, and throat specialist practicing in Chicago, someone whose judgment had always seemed to me good and who was himself reputed to be a fine doctor. He sent me to the smartest orthopedic man he knew (a retired surgeon), solely for the purpose of getting me some intelligent counsel. The idea here was to have a highly experienced orthopedist evaluate whether or not I needed surgery again and, if so, to recommend a good surgeon. By this process I wound up with my regular orthopedist, into whose care I have entrusted myself for nearly a decade.

He is a brusque, no-nonsense sort of fellow, very Germanic in appearance and manner. I immediately liked him. I was drawn to his intense, rational manner and his seriousness, as well as to his wit, which is so dry as to be almost vaporous. In one of my first visits I spotted a clear plastic paperweight on his desk that seemed characteristic of him. On it was written: "Insanity *is* hereditary. You get it from your children." The line captures his sense of humor perfectly. The model of the sensitive, highly solicitous practitioner is not for him; he never coddles patients. His doctorly persona—it is, clearly, a self-chosen role—is that of a gruff, dedicated surgeon who does not mince words, someone who is contemplative, firm, and sure in judgment yet not falsely authoritative, confident yet not cocky, sympathetic yet in no way softhearted. He first persuaded me to undergo surgery with him by resorting to a line that is probably an old standby taught to all surgeons in the first few weeks of their training but one that worked on me nonetheless. He said: "If you were my son, this is what I'd recommend. . . ." Perhaps, as a college student at the time, I was a bit of an innocent, but I believed that he meant it.

Recently, when discussing the prospect of

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surgery yet again, my orthopedist said: "No doctor worth going to will be threatened by a second opinion." That is probably the freshest cliché of the medical profession, and, as tends to be true of clichés, one more often mouthed than believed. But no proof was necessary on my orthopedist's part; he had already referred me to his partner, who had special expertise in knee surgery and who had experience with a surgical technique, known as abrasion chondroplasty, that might be applicable in my case. The purpose of my appointment with the partner had been to seek another opinion, not to satisfy me but to satisfy my orthopedist—to allow him, in other words, to consult professionally with his colleague. I of course complied, not only because I aspired to be a good patient but also because I was slightly flattered to know that my case possessed such a delicious degree of difficulty that it required high-level professional consultation.

I half believed that, because of the unusualness of my knee problems—the partner had told me that he had seen only one other patient with a cyst of such size in a knee—they would occupy some prominent place in my doctor's consciousness. This fiction accomplished two things: first, it elevated the pain and discomfort I felt to a dignified plateau; and, second, it suggested that, because of the uniqueness of my knee problems, my doctor would exercise a special diligence with me, and I would be safe.

The actual events turned out differently. The partner saw me twice. Near the end of the second visit he recommended that I have major surgery: a proximal tibial osteotomy and a bone graft of a cyst in the right medial femoral condyle, with the possibility also of some arthroscopic work on the surface of the joint itself. Because over the years my orthopedist had educated me about the course he expected my knee problems to take, the proposed surgery had not come as a complete surprise. The terminology and procedures were pretty clear to me. (He wanted to realign my leg, thereby easing the weight borne by the inside part of the knee joint, and to fill the cyst—a saclike growth filled with liquid—by a bone graft.) What I didn't understand was why so much surgery was needed and why the partner had proposed it. Was I being passed on to another doctor, I wondered?

The longish wait in the reception room, together with the monogrammed Brooks Brothers shirt, the costly cuff links, the all-around well-fed look, had done nothing to endear me to the partner. I should probably also mention that I had seen this same doctor years before when he was an intern at Iowa City. At that time he was to have presented my case to a panel of orthopedists, but on the appointed day he for some reason canceled all of his appointments on short notice and failed—somehow—to inform my family and me. This caused considerable bad feeling between us (at least I felt bad feeling toward him), the last vestiges of which were still lingering when, years later, he became, by sheerest coincidence, my orthopedist's partner.

During my appointments he gave no indication that he remembered our earlier meeting. Doubtless he didn't, for besides his lack of due remorse, he compounded the problem by ordering several hundred dollars' worth of tests: X rays from new angles, a tomogram, a bone scan. The tests seemed to me unnecessary; they seemed to establish nothing that had not already been for many years all too clear to my regular orthopedist and nothing that was not already recorded in my medical history. But, by thinking so, I may have done him an injustice. After all, it was I who came out of the blue and presented myself to him for inspection, one for which he might conceivably be held liable in a lawsuit alleging negligence, so he had, I suppose, a perfect right to educate himself about the case in whatever way he thought best.

Still, I immediately scheduled another appointment with my regular orthopedist. I felt—and truly despised myself for feeling so—very much like a child who flies to a parent to tell all. I wanted confirmation from *my* orthopedist, someone whom I trusted, that I did indeed need surgery. The relationship between patients and their doctors without question bears a resemblance to that between a child and his parents, but the analogy, besides being vastly overused, is inadequate. Patients are also in a sense customers who purchase services; they are students who learn from their doctors about their maladies and the treatments for them; they are believers who put their faith in a higher authority; they are also at times purely victims, too much in pain to speak or think for themselves, or even to believe or care about anyone or any-

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thing besides relief. At one time or another I felt like all of these.

My relations with doctors were also never static. After each visit I made minor adjustments in my perception of them, of their intelligence and character, their interest in my particular medical problem, and their concern for me. Take as an example my orthopedist, who merely grumbled when told about his partner's recommendation of surgery. Seeming to take that much for granted, he began to grouse that one aspect of the case—how to treat the surface of the knee joint—had not been sufficiently considered. Purely medical concerns, in other words, occupied him while I was concerned only with resolving the questions about the surgery and obtaining relief. Each week my knees became more painful, more of a permanent irritant. Three appointments (two with the partner, one with my regular orthopedist) and two months later, still no solution seemed imminent.

My insurance company had also served up a few complications of its own. It required a confirming opinion on most surgical procedures—a sensible and quite practical safeguard when one considers that as many as one out of every six operations are nowadays said to be unnecessary. Without a second opinion, I stood to pay as much as 50 percent of the cost of the operation, which I expected to total something on the order of eight to ten thousand dollars. The insurance did not allow partners in the same orthopedic firm to give second opinions for each other; so, after approximately ten phone calls, another surgical opinion was arranged through the insurance company. When in an offhand remark I mentioned the name of the second-opinion doctor to my orthopedist, he nearly suffered apoplexy. The fellow was a hand surgeon! I canceled the appointment forthwith, much to the chagrin of the insurance company and over their quite strong objections. My orthopedist asked his partner to advise me about competent surgeons whom I could suggest to the insurance company, and that is exactly what happened: I named the man for the insurance company, and they set up the appointment and paid the bill. But why had the partner made the recommendation to me? Why didn't my orthopedist make the recommendation himself? Here the first fissure in my trust began.

As it turned out, my orthopedist had reasons for acting as he did. For one, he was not an advocate of abrasion chondroplasty, a new arthroscopic technique then very much in vogue and one, possibly, that was applicable to my case. Yet he wanted to hear what surgeons who had used the procedure successfully would make of a patient with a knee like mine. I admired his cautious approach to trendy medical procedures. Lamaze childbirths, mastectomies, bypass surgery—each of them, once so promising and so highly touted, has seen the enthusiasm for them in recent years cool considerably. My orthopedist's skepticism agreed with my own habit of mind. But at the same time I felt he was pushing me off onto his partner. One remark came back to me. The partner had once said that he now did most of the knee surgery in the practice. What was going on?

My doubts had plenty of time to churn. The second-opinion appointment, which had been scheduled for the earliest possible date, was some two months off. I had most of July and all of August to fret and stew in a state of perfect uncertainty. Nothing in my life seemed properly settled. Everything was on hold until I arrived at some decision about surgery. That I would have surgery of some kind now seemed well established. The questions that pressed in upon me at the moment were: Which procedures ought to be performed? And when, if ever, would the surgery be done?

Each week brought new doubts. Friends, co-workers, a grocer, the janitor of my apartment building all came forth with well-meaning medical advice. One friend, for example, offered to help me with the cost of airfare to Tennessee so that I might consult with an orthopedist who had reconstructed the ligaments in his knee. An executive at the corporation for which I work, upon learning that I was contemplating surgery, stopped me regularly in the halls for what amounted to orthopedic progress reports. She urged me, gently but quite persuasively, to see her orthopedist. He worked out of a fancy "sports clinic" and was said to be the surgical talent in a partnership that had operated successfully on a number of professional baseball and football players. He had, in any case, repaired one of her shoulders and enabled her to continue playing tennis, a game she is absolutely crazy

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about. She exemplified what is a fairly common type of patient: one of the healed who, out of an excess of gratitude, has become an avid proselytizer.

Advice from friends becomes all the more disconcerting when one considers one's advisers to be highly intelligent. This executive happened to be a very savvy woman. It made me nervous that she had been to see my orthopedist's partner but had decided against allowing him to operate on her. My doubts were further agitated by two other friends, a university teacher and his wife, who began to make some gentle recommendations of their own. My friend's wife—on my advice, no less—had been to see my orthopedist for a back problem. She found him generally too gruff and too peremptory; he had issued her a take-it-or-leave-it prognosis of two weeks in traction, and she left it. Another physician subsequently solved her back problems through the simple remedy of floor exercises. How is a patient supposed to look at such damning evidence against his physician? Is he to regard it as a mere fluke? Or otherwise? I decided to visit her orthopedist.

With fifteen years' worth of medical history and X rays in an oversized manilla envelope, I trudged into Chicago to see the orthopedist who solved my friend's back problems. She had warned me that this orthopedist was in his early thirties, scarcely older than I; but he had the good fortune to join one of the big-name orthopedic practices downtown. His manner seemed reassuringly doctorly—detached, slightly paternalistic—but also casual, that of an expert very much in control. After reviewing the medical history and X rays, he concurred with the surgery that had been recommended for me, but he seemed to be holding himself back a little, as if unwilling to involve himself any more than was necessary. I wondered why.

The answer came when I unintentionally offended him. Out of idle curiosity as much as anything, I had asked him why a bright young surgeon such as himself was not on the list of orthopedists approved by my insurance company to give second opinions. He did not wish to be on such a list, I was informed. Surgeons make their money by performing surgery and can best spend their time during office hours seeing prospective candidates for the operating table, not by giving second opinions.

He was slightly miffed at the question. His anger caused him to be more candid and free with his opinions, to the extent at least that he editorialized some on the orthopedists I had consulted. He made a special point to commend my orthopedist's partner to me as "a fine, fine doctor." He did so twice, as a matter of fact, thereby damning my regular orthopedist not by faint but by no praise.

The appointment had confirmed the necessity of the surgery in its various procedures and had raised slightly my estimation of my orthopedist's partner. Yet it did not seem possible to draw any conclusions about whether to perform all of the surgical procedures at one time or to do them in stages, or about when this surgery might take place. On the contrary, here the waters now seemed muddier than ever. In fact, I had begun to ask myself more questions still: What if my regular orthopedist did not care to do the surgery? Whom did I want to be the surgeon then? My second-opinion appointment still lay a month off. I tended to discount it as a mere formality. As I considered possible surgeons, the orthopedist that my corporate friend had touted, the one who had rebuilt her shoulder, came to mind. Was another opinion warranted? Was it acceptable—that is, was it still thinkable for someone who considered himself a reasonable person—to solicit still another opinion? Whether rightly or wrongly, I decided it was.

The two remaining appointments (the fourth and the fifth opinions) fell within the same week. The first of these was the second-opinion appointment for the insurance company and was scheduled with the orthopedist recommended to me by my orthopedist's partner. In other words, it was not a prospect for which I had particularly high hopes. But this surgeon was affiliated with a major teaching hospital and major medical school, which are commonly thought of as signs of the highest accreditation. To such physicians the layman attributes an enviable battery of skills: a knowledge of tricky cases, a familiarity with the latest surgical procedures and equipment, a diagnostic ability for ailments common and obscure, a surgical touch of great subtlety.

On the day of my appointment, this orthopedist's waiting room was crowded. Many patients were escorted by family or friends. The patients also seemed, as the conversations among them during the next hour or so

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amply bore out, much more badly broken up than the general run of orthopedic patients: one had a shattered elbow, another a leg with multiple fractures, others with one or both knees in casts, a few others (all elderly) in wheelchairs. It seemed immediately clear that these were all difficult cases. My knee problems seemed a small matter in comparison. It also became obvious very soon that the appointments schedule for the afternoon had been drastically overbooked. Inquiry revealed that a wait of two hours most likely lay ahead, perhaps more; the receptionist suggested that I step out for a late lunch.

Almost the instant the appointment began I realized that I had been wrong to regard this opinion as a formality. The orthopedist—a wiry man, roughly fortyish, balding, and whose voice had the most unaffected sincerity imaginable—concentrated intensely on my case, as if he were painfully conscious of how little time he could devote to me. He reviewed the medical history and made the physical examination of the joints; then he studied, in complete silence, the X rays I had brought with me, not speaking for minutes, only sifting through and shuffling film of the various views of the knee joints taken over the last decade. By the time he at last spoke, the suspense had built to a high level: on the whole he could see, and concur with, the direction in which my physicians were going. Had they ever spoken to me about rebuilding the knee through bone grafts? Had they put me on a pre-surgical exercise regimen? No one had ever suggested anything of the kind, so he offered to write my orthopedists a note to go along with his opinion.

I know nothing more about the nature of this missive. I felt in any case that I had been in the care of a fine doctor. Knowledge, skill, high ideals, intensity, sincerity, compassion—he seemed to possess all these qualities and to have brought them to bear, for a few moments at least, on my problem. For that is increasingly the way I felt: I had a problem with my knees, one that in all likelihood I would have to live with for the rest of my life, upon which doctors would provide, for a fee, their opinions. They seemed to have too little invested in these opinions; I too much.

Dedication seemed not to be the issue with this doctor, or for that matter with my regular orthopedist. The issue with this man seemed to be his general point of view. He practiced medicine in a world fraught with debilitating injuries, one in which the bodily materials of bone and ligament and muscle are so much putty to shape, where one naturally thinks more often of reconstruction than of simply mending. His point of view became clear to me after I read an article describing his research, which is in artificial knee replacements, and his affiliation with a rehabilitation institute in Chicago. My knee did not need to be rehabbed; it only needed a little repair work.

Even though I was pleased to have received his medical opinion, I was, strangely, little wiser after my visit. The appointment solidified the confidence I had placed in my orthopedist and his partner, for it had after a fashion confirmed their approach. Although more complicated procedures were hinted at, I was content to leave those unexplored as long as the possibilities I had before me seemed sensible.

Later in the week I went to see the other surgeon, someone who is probably one of my orthopedist's greatest rivals. This fellow, who came so strongly recommended to me by a corporate executive, seemed truly a businessman's doctor. He is a small but relatively successful entrepreneur in his own right, having formed a partnership with some other orthopedists, X-ray technicians, and physical therapists to make a "sports clinic" that offers, as they say, the whole package. The clinic has an ultra-modern décor—a chrome-and-glass coffee table displaying an array of chic magazines; wall hangings tastefully intermingled with paintings and sculptures; plush, shaggy carpeting into which one sinks almost up to the ankles; and a bright sofa with large, fluffy pillows that is surrounded by leafy plants—in other words, exactly the furnishings one expects to find in an overpriced hair salon or diet center. Supplying the finishing touch, the door through which patients pass on their way in to see the doctor slides back and forth electronically like something out of a science-fiction movie.

I was by now an accomplished physician-watcher. This orthopedist, for example, seemed determined to remain unbiased by previous medical history or X rays and instead relied on primary data. He painstakingly wrote down each detail of my medical history

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as I told it to him, just as if he were still an intern, and then he did the physical workup. His manner was one of consummate efficiency. When at last he took up the medical history I had brought with me, he began to read parts of it aloud: "'I am very pleased with the progress the patient is making. He seems to have recovered most satisfactorily.' Seems awfully satisfied with himself, doesn't he? Ah, and look at that incision! Quite a piece of handiwork, isn't it?" These remarks about my orthopedist—the snidest I had heard from any of the doctors—brought to mind George Eliot's comment about medical men "fouling their own nest," which by her reckoning was perhaps "the most ungentlemanly trick a man can be guilty of."

The backbiting had the effect not of undermining my confidence in my regular orthopedist, which I took to be its purpose, but rather of destroying this orthopedist's credibility. The remarks were patently unfair. My orthopedist did not make the first incision; he only followed the one made during the first surgery in Iowa—something a little closer attention to the medical history would have shown. His position amounted to his saying that up to this time I had been in the care of a self-satisfied, slightly inept hack. It hardly allowed him to agree with the surgical procedures recommended to me. The only attractive alternative, and indeed the one he chose, was to recommend less surgery. After leading me into his office, where he sat behind a wide, solid desk, he explained that I needed only the osteotomy (the shifting of the weight) and that the cyst and surface of the joint would probably heal on their own once the leg was realigned. Besides, if more surgery was needed, it could always be performed later.

Five orthopedic surgeons—among the best available in the area—all confirmed the need for surgery, but not exactly the same surgery. There seemed no alternative but to have an operation, yet what exactly would happen once I climbed onto the operating table remained an open question. The osteotomy, the bone grafting of the cyst, the abrasion chondroplasty all were discussed and more or less agreed to by several orthopedists, but each of them also recognized that the arthroscopic work on the joint (the abrasion chondroplasty) would complicate and lengthen the recovery period, which already promised to keep me out of work for one month and on crutches for a minimum of two months. The orthopedists also never did agree on what exactly was causing my pain and discomfort. The opinions, in other words, had mostly succeeded in creating a great deal of doubt, raising many questions and solving scarcely any.

I was informed about the surgical procedures quite fully. What I lacked was the medical expertise to know whether the benefit of these procedures was enough to justify their inconvenience to me and disruption of my life, their risk, and their expense. What a patient cannot know—and what, very likely, his doctor does not himself always know with complete certainty—is the exact benefit an operation will bring.

For me, the question of which surgical procedures to have was in the end secondary to an even more important question: Which orthopedist should be the surgeon? Most likely the choice of surgeon would determine which procedures would be performed. Through his reticence to become fully involved, my regular orthopedist had created some real doubts for me about whether he even cared to perform the operation. He seemed in my opinion too willing to share me with his partner, with whom I was still not entirely comfortable. The whole situation was very odd and left me at a loss about what to do.

How ought one to choose a surgeon? For the record, I probably ought to provide my own informal list of qualifications for any surgeon who intends to work on me or any relatives entrusted to my care. The surgeon needs, first of all, to be something of a perfectionist and to possess a high degree of seriousness about the practice of medicine. Neatness would be much appreciated, compassion an absolute requirement. The intense, highly strung teaching surgeon is not necessarily my type either. (All this assumes only mundane surgery, nothing fancy.) As a patient I require plenty of follow-up care, plus time for a little schmoozing on the side, which I imagine would be difficult for a busy teacher-researcher-surgeon to provide. But far and away the most important criterion in my book for a surgeon is that he have a genuine concern for his patients, for that is what inspires trust. In retrospect, I realize my choice of a

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surgeon had finally only that criterion: trust.

The opinion-hunting had cost a sizable chunk of money ($692, $25, $60, $55, and $180, a total of $1,012 for tests, X rays, and appointments, of which I paid roughly $240 or so out of pocket). It had also spanned three-and-one-half months, and still it had left me facing a tough decision. Whom was I to trust? I decided after great soul-searching to talk once more with my regular orthopedist. He had been my doctor for almost a decade, creating a bond not easily cast aside without some fairly substantial reasons. Granted he had seemed preoccupied and had been subject to criticism by colleagues. He was also, I later learned, a highly visible member of the local medical community, being the chief of staff and a board member of two suburban hospitals. The criticism might well have been motivated as much by political as by medical reasons. He had my trust in any event, mostly because he cared about me and was, in his thinking about my particular knee problems, two or three steps ahead of everyone else.

My appointment with him was early one Saturday morning. The office had just opened for the day's business. The receptionist greeted me, and, as he was pulling on his blue doctor's smock, so, too, did my orthopedist, calling me by name and inviting me back to the examining rooms. We conversed for the next fifteen or so minutes. So what had I learned in my second opinions? He listened with calm detachment, grumbling occasionally as I recounted the salient points of my visits to the last three orthopedists. Then he asked me point-blank, "What do *you* want to do?" I told him I wanted his best opinion. He explained that he thought I needed the osteotomy and the bone grafting of the cyst but not the abrasion chondroplasty. This last, he felt, would too greatly complicate and prolong the recuperation period. He said that he would do the surgery if I wished, but that he preferred to perform it with his partner, though for reasons he never fully explained. (My guess was that in a few years he will retire from surgery, and he wants me to be in the care of an able surgeon who is knowledgeable about my knees.) Whatever his reasons, I did not resist him. I consented to the surgery then and there, having already decided that there was but one thing for me to do, and that was to trust him.

The many doctors' opinions that I received never did provide the indisputable consensus I had imagined—and hoped for. Far from it. But they gave me something of an education. I learned what it felt like simply to purchase medical expertise. I learned the enormous value of having a physician whom one trusts. I learned, too, that in medicine there are no simple answers to complicated questions.

The operation itself took place one month after that last appointment. The surgery cost nearly $10,000 (of which my portion after insurance came to approximately $700), which seemed a small sum to pay to be able to walk comfortably again. Looking back on the surgery now almost two years later, I have come to regard the operation, somewhat cautiously, as a success. The confidence I had placed in my surgeons, I believe, has been borne out. Yet one final thing I learned in going through my minor ordeal is that, from a layman's standpoint, the more one learns about medicine, the more one becomes aware that it owes quite as much to art as to science. Should the day come when I require yet another operation, I hope I can resolve any decisions about it with fewer than five medical opinions. But I wouldn't bet on it.

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Tory Alice

GEORGE WATSON

In 1948 a generous group of Americans presented the manuscript of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to the British Museum: eager, as they said in the *London Times* of November 15, 1948, to "show their appreciation of the courage of these islands in protecting liberty during two world wars."

Lewis Carroll would have applauded that. But he might also have felt that for the best part of a century the political point of his little book had been missed. True, teasing both his *Alice* stories for significance—*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872)—is by now an old game, and a good one: the only meaning to be confidently excluded at the outset being that they might be meant to teach children better behavior. Carroll himself once remarked that "they do not teach anything at all"—implying that they do not belong to that familiar class of children's stories, like Maria Edgeworth's, that train the young to lead virtuous and tractable lives. Quite the reverse, in fact. In the most ordinary sense of edification, the *Alice* stories are more or less anti-edifying. But they have often been raked by scholars for other kinds of sense, usually linguistic and philosophical. I want to suggest that they reflect on public affairs in Victorian times as well, and even on party polemics in that age. They were written by a highly conservative young Oxford don whose interests sometimes extended beyond university politics, where they were always most at home, into the affairs of the British nation.

That may be a new suggestion. But it is one less fanciful than some already familiar, such as William Empson's notorious Freudian-sexual interpretation in *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935). Saki's "Westminster Alice" sketches of 1900–1902 are not, I believe, a precursor, since Saki probably meant to suggest nothing more, when he mocked the Salisbury government during the Boer War in the *Westminster Gazette*, than that modern politicians could be made fun of in parodies of Carroll's prose and Tenniel's illustrations. And the best-known books on Carroll in recent times have little to say on his politics, and that (as I hope to show) misleading. A point has been missed, through inattention.

Two misapprehensions, at least, need to be set aside at the outset: that, being nonsense literature, the *Alice* books are about nothing real; and that, being children's literature, they are likely to be best understood by children. Either view would forbid serious interpretation of almost any sort; and both, fortunately, are wrong.

Nonsense can refer to an assertion held to be false, as in a rude riposte when you disagree. It can also, and quite distinctly, refer to a totally meaningless utterance, as when you stutter or type blindfolded. Nonsense literature concerns neither of those usages. The term indicates a literary kind, like epic or comedy, and one pioneered for the Victorians nearly twenty years before *Alice* by Edward Lear in *A Book of Nonsense* (1846), where reality is turned variously upside down and inside out. More recent instances are T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939), or Douglas Adams's *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979) and its sequels. Such books are neither meaningless, like a bad stutter, nor in their nature wrongheaded; still less can it be said that they assert nothing

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at all. Lear, Eliot, and Adams are all playing games with comic realism, with new rules superadded: animals and monsters behaving like people, for example. In a similar way, I suggest, there is a perfectly recognizable reality behind the *Alice* books, even though no one would call them works of realism: a mid-Victorian nursery, it seems clear, where good manners are enforced at table and at play, and where children learn poems by heart and recite them on demand.

Lewis Carroll's favorite inside-out device is to turn a nursery rhyme like "The Queen of Hearts she made some tarts" or "The Lion and the Unicorn" into a wild version of social comedy. But when he does that, he is pulling traditional and highly non-realistic originals some little way toward realism, never pushing them further off; and there is a firm smack of reality, too, in his awareness that a mid-Victorian dean's daughter like Alice Liddell might be expected to have seen more of the household servants than of her own parents. The Red Queen is an utterly recognizable parody of a bossy governess, as Miss Liddell herself would instantly realize: "the concentrated essence of all governesses," Carroll was to call her years later (*Theatre*, April 1887). Most of us know people like Eliot's practical cats, for that matter—Gus the Theatre Cat, for instance, the decayed actor who boasts his triumphs on the boards; and anyone who studied literature at a university would recognize Douglas Adams's parody of practical criticism in the *Hitch Hiker's Guide* and (without any experience of universities) the personality of Arthur Dent—the kind of man who, even in a cosmic crisis, wonders where the next cup of tea is coming from. Nonsense literature is nothing like realism. But it is, at least fitfully, something like reality.

It is in that overriding sense that the best-known study of the genre, Elizabeth Sewell's *The Field of Nonsense* (1952), ultimately fails to convince, since it resolutely sees nonsense literature as the English equivalent of French symbolist poetry and even of music, claiming for it a total "separation" from reality like that of the logical puzzle. But in the Lear-Carroll tradition, at least, that separation is simply not there: rather a sort of mild unhooking, at moments, and an eternal readiness to hook back on. The *Alice* books are plainly about social reality—much as dreams are, one is inclined to add. And of course the first of the *Alice* books is a dream about a game of cards, among other things, as readers usually guess long before it ends. Dreams jumble up reality, but what they are jumbling is real—sometimes all too real. And there are more ways than realism of describing reality.

As for what children understand of these books, it is widely accepted (I believe) that children do not usually like them. There is a story about Princess Margaret visiting Oxford in the 1950s and lunching in Christ Church, which was Carroll's old college. "I live in Lewis Carroll's rooms," her host remarked, "the author of *Alice in Wonderland*." "Oh, I never liked those books as a child," answered the Princess, "and neither did my sister." And the literary judgment thus reported of Queen Elizabeth II in that little anecdote could easily have been true of many Victorian children too. It was certainly predicted of them by an early reviewer. "Any real child," remarked a nameless critic in *The Athenaeum* (December 16, 1865), "might be more puzzled than enchanted by this stiff, over-wrought story." It is probably not just twentieth-century children, then, who have found the *Alice* books opaque and unsympathetic. For one thing, they are over-allusive and difficult of texture, composed as they are by one academic for the children of another. And again, Alice is nearly always right, except of course when she is trying to repeat her lessons; and children surely do not see the world in that way. Adults can be difficult and inscrutable to the childish mind, but they are still impressively powerful and worthy of respectful attention and affection, in a general way. The *Alice* books do not offer that view of the world, as the Doctor Doolittle books do, for example, or Arthur Ransome's. "A child's first attitude to the world," Carroll wrote in the preface to *Alice's Adventures under Ground* (1886), "is a simple love for all living things." Well, perhaps; but in that case, his books are disturbingly something else.

The truth is that the *Alice* books are at some points fierce—at others, rancidly cynical. If the Red Queen is the concentrated essence of all governesses, then she is very unlikely to be that essence as conceived of by little Alice Liddell herself, whom photographs show as a demure Victorian child; and considered as an instruction to Alice as to what to think about

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governesses, she is plainly unsettling. As for the parodies of famous poems by Isaac Watts and Robert Southey—"How doth the little crocodile" and "You are old, Father William"—the originals are admittedly poems a little girl might have been made to learn by heart. But surely not to parody—and plainly not to parody in so subversive and dismissive a way. One imagines Alice Liddell listening to Carroll's devastating revisions of these highly edifying poems with an amusement strongly tinged with puzzlement and alarm.

And yet Carroll had moments, and perhaps more than moments, when he behaved as if he considered the books to be designed for the young. He published them on the adult advice of Henry Kingsley and George MacDonald. But he often sent copies to children; and the opening poem of *Alice in Wonderland* offers the book to Alice Liddell herself: "Alice! a childish story take. . . ." Authors can be wrong about their own books, and this may be presumed a classic instance. And it is a mistake likely to have grown in his mind by gentle accumulation. The first draft, *Alice's Adventures under Ground*, which Carroll charitably published years later, in 1886, for the profit of children's hospitals, is less than half the length of *Alice in Wonderland* itself, and in some ways less argumentative and acerbic. That in itself may go some way toward explaining Carroll's success with three little girls in a boat on the Thames near Oxford in July 1862. For the rest, it hardly needs to be added that bachelor dons can be charming, not least to little girls, and summer picnics still more so, and the combination of the two more or less irresistible. And of course we all *want* to believe that three children on that hot day on the river loved the story, in its first version. Let us hope they did. . . . But in our own times, it seems clear, interpreting the *Alice* books is a task that cannot safely be left to the young.

What did Lewis Carroll—or rather the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson—think about public affairs in the 1860s, when he began to write these books?

Dodgson was born in the year of the first Reform Act of 1832; and *Alice in Wonderland* appeared in 1865, the year of Palmerston's death as prime minister at the age of eighty. Palmerston was the last Whig to hold that office, in the sense of being the last to acknowledge the title; and three years later Gladstone became the first Liberal prime minister, facing Disraeli as Tory leader across the Commons for little more than eight years, altogether, till Disraeli left for the House of Lords in 1876.

The conception of *Alice*, then, belongs to the early 1860s, when two brilliant aspirants to power, Gladstone and Disraeli, were nervously and impatiently edging forward to rival leaderships—and to their first years as leaders. And midway within that period, and between the two books, falls the second Reform Act of 1867—introduced by Disraeli's first and briefer administration to steal the Whigs' clothes and rob Gladstonian Liberalism of any exclusive credit for extending the suffrage. In other words, the *Alice* books were composed when Liberalism was replacing Whiggism in the leadership of one great party of state, and confirming its position as the chief party of government.

It is not usually thought that Carroll took much interest in such matters. Virginia Woolf, when she reviewed the Nonesuch Omnibus Carroll for the *New Statesman* (December 9, 1939), concluded witheringly that "the Reverend C. L. Dodgson had no life"; that he accepted, as a Victorian bachelor don, every convention of the day, and preserved himself "free from all trial and trouble." A lifelong child himself, in short, and happiest with other children. But that portrait no longer convinces. For one thing, the fat and unlovely Nonesuch Carroll is by no means as complete as she supposed, though it is still the fullest collection there is; and pamphleteering apart, there is by now a wealth of materials in diaries and letters edited since she wrote her review. The fact is that Carroll, whatever his existential deficiencies, was a strong Conservative in a Liberal age, and he wrote some savagely polemical pamphlets—only some of which figure in the Nonesuch volume of 1939 in its final section. Most of them are against change, though his individual eccentricity appears in writings against animal vivisection and for proportional representation in parliamentary elections. And not all his political interests were centered on his university. Carroll wrote some fierce squibs against Gladstone, for example, turning the twenty-one letters of his hated name, William Ewart Gladstone, into at

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least three hostile anagrams—the last of them referring to the statesman's notorious propensity for chopping down trees:

Wilt tear down all images?
Wild agitator! means well,

and

A wild man will go at trees,

while a friendlier anagram by another,

I, wise Mr. G, want to lead all

was answered by Carroll with the name of his own beloved leader:

Disraeli: I lead, Sir!

Conservatives are not usually happy men, but Virginia Woolf was right to conclude that Carroll was an exception. Perhaps it would be better to say that converts to conservatism, being disillusioned idealists, tend to be unhappy men—so much so, indeed, that it is often unclear whether they are conservative because they are unhappy or unhappy because they are conservative. That was not Carroll's case. He was always a Conservative, and the evidence suggests that it had never occurred to him to be anything else. He is the Dodo of *Alice in Wonderland*. The dodo is an extinct species; and it has pleased many a dyed-in-the-wool conservative to think of his own species as extinct, or at least endangered, though Carroll had the additional reason that he stuttered when he introduced himself as Dodgson. He also possessed the curiously invulnerable advantage in life that he could not be a disillusioned idealist because he had never had ideals. As an Anglican clergyman, his religious convictions may be presumed conventional rather than intense, and strongly bound into the practices of an established church. His faith was tribal; and idealism, whether of church or state, he would always have thought of as silly at best and dangerous at worst.

None of that passes without its reflection in the *Alice* books. Whereas Alice herself is sensible, the characters she meets are extreme. They hold fanciful pictures of reality, and even more fanciful pictures of what needs to be done about it; and in contrast to her unwavering decorum, they behave in extravagant and unseemly ways. And Carroll was strong on decorum. In a letter in the *Oxford University Herald* for November 28, 1868, for example, ironically signed "A Liberal of the Liberals," he implicitly extolled the silent courtesy of Tory voters in a recent election at Woodstock, and contrasted it with the noisy, exuberant behavior of a Liberal mob. In their quiet way, similarly, the *Alice* stories speak up continuously in favor of Doing the Right Thing.

Unguessed at by Saki or Virginia Woolf, what is more, Carroll took an excited interest in Westminster politics. In April 1867, as he notes in his diary, he visited the gallery of the House of Commons one evening and sat happily through the second reading of Disraeli's Reform Bill, hearing several speeches from Disraeli himself as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and an amusing Liberal attack on Sir Stafford Northcote; and he writes about it as if parliamentary debates have all the fun of a good game, rather like croquet or tennis. He then followed his hours in the gallery with dinner in the Members' Room, as the guest of a Tory MP; and returned a year later, in April 1868, to hear long speeches from Disraeli as prime minister and from Gladstone as opposition leader—this time on the disestablishment of the Irish Church.

And there was never a doubt, on that issue as on others, which side he was on. Carroll hated the Liberals. That was only to be expected: the only surprise here is that he seems never to have pined for an older and more traditional style of Tory leadership—one less exotic than Disraeli's and more safely predictable. But the simple and surprising truth is that he was a devoted Disraelian. When his hero died in 1881, Carroll in a letter called him "quite the greatest statesman of our times" (April 25, 1881), and a shining example to all of courage in adversity and constancy of purpose; contrasting him with Gladstone, who had cravenly resigned the leadership of his party in defeat and resumed it "as soon as they had recovered themselves." Carroll was a party man, no doubt of it, in his crusted-port way. And that is no metaphor. Claret is a mere French wine, he once gaily wrote to a lady, and it was no credit to Gladstone that in 1860 he had lowered taxes on French wines in his budget. It is a drink, he wrote, "which no real

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Englishman (unless a believer in Mr. Gladstone) would ever drink—when he could get port" (February 12, 1874). Carroll can joke about convictions, and often does. But his convictions were fierce.

One reason why we have missed all of this is that Carroll's diaries and letters have only recently been published—many of them since the 1950s. Another is that, in the *Alice* books at least, Carroll has encouraged us to miss it. Tweedledum and Tweedledee are easily quoted as implying that, in any two-party system, each party believes in much the same thing, though Carroll himself never seriously thought that the Tory-Liberal contest of his day was like that. And his borrowing of the American political term *caucus* is puzzling, or distracting, in a similar way. "Everybody has won, and all must have prizes," it is said at the end of the caucus in *Alice in Wonderland* (chap. 3), as if the committees that selected parliamentary candidates had nothing better to do than to keep everyone happy. (That was not what they had to do, and it is not what they did.) And on the condition of children and their judicial punishment, Carroll has been so wildly misinterpreted—and that in the best-known collection on his writings in our times, *Aspects of Alice*, edited by Robert Phillips (1971)—that one can only suspect the deliberation of malice, and here the malice is not his. The book conveniently collects the views of Empson, Virginia Woolf, and Elizabeth Sewell, so that it cannot be called useless. But I refer rather to a new article there called "The Alice Books and the Metaphors of Victorian Childhood" by Dr. Jan B. Gordon.

At the time the book appeared, Dr. Gordon was reported to be teaching history at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and he acknowledges the help of "three enthusiastic colleagues" there. On this occasion, however, enthusiasm seems to have outrun evidence, and it is high time someone asked him, and them, to substantiate their case about the barbarous treatment of children in nineteenth-century England.

During the Napoleonic Wars, Dr. Gordon alleges, British factory owners asked the younger Pitt, as prime minister, for a wage cut, and Pitt callously answered, "Take the children." Dr. Gordon calls that "a cruel way of equating children and adults." If it implies that children's wages were lower than adults, as it surely does, then the equation sounds more like a distinction. But the nasty little story has no known source; and though a note refers to Élie Halévy's *England in 1815* (1924), it is nowhere to be found in that book, and it is generally unknown to biographers of the younger Pitt. Evidently the spirit of fiction is not confined to the writing of novels, or to writing about them, since Dr. Gordon elsewhere implies that Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) is a Victorian work. It would be instructive to know who invented that ugly little story about William Pitt, and why.

A few pages on, and Dr. Gordon claims that hard-faced Victorian legislators abolished the very concept of childhood in courts of law, reducing the privileges that children had once possessed. The British judicial system, he writes, "which had formerly placed the juvenile offender within a separate court system, now made the child subject to the workhouse and the prison. There are records of children in their teens being hung for petty crimes in the 1850s." But we are not told what records; still less are we told what separate court system existed for children before Victoria became queen in 1837. The truth is that such systems, of which the first glimmerings appear in late Victorian times, are substantially a creation of our own century, and the notion that the Victorians abolished them is profoundly absurd. There was nothing, after all, to abolish.

But there is a still deeper absurdity to come. Dr. Gordon next proceeds to suggest that labor legislation protected children less in Victorian times than in the eighteenth century. The Factory Act of 1833 and its successors make that a staggering suggestion to offer. If the *Alice* books are to be placed in their historical context, then that context by the 1860s includes legislation favoring the special status of children unparalleled, so far, in all human history. Their employment below ground had been forbidden by the Acts of 1833 and 1842; their hours of labor were to be progressively limited by legislation for a century and more; and the defining age of childhood for trial and punishment continued to rise throughout Victoria's reign. The idea that "children in their teens" were hanged in the 1850s for petty crimes is preposterous. There

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is no record of any child being hanged for any crime whatever in that decade, or in the earlier nineteenth century either: that, at least, was the tentative finding of B. E. F. Knell in his article "Capital Punishment" in the *British Journal of Criminology* (vol. 5, 1965). By the 1850s, in any case, hardly any capital offenses survived in Britain other than treason, murder, and robbery-with-violence, and no such crime could be called petty. It is doubtful, then, if any Victorian of any age, adult or child, was ever hanged for a petty offense.

Carroll himself is unlikely to have been moved by such considerations, surprising as they are, and he is not known to have been an exponent of light sentences. His own ideal of goodness was strenuously "ungoody." Goodiness was above all the failing of Radicals; and the *Alice* books sound forth a continuous note of derision:

> Speak roughly to your little boy,
> And beat him when he sneezes

may not be Carroll's most serious conclusion about child nurture, but you often feel that he would like to jolt the reader, as he does here, into considering virtues beyond the merely sentimental. The *Alice* books are brisk and bracing in their moral tone. At heart, in his Toryism, Carroll was surely one of Nature's hangers-and-floggers; or, if not altogether that, at least a spirit highly impatient with the cloying rhetoric of compassion and benevolence. The world is what it is, and it is mostly folly to wish it otherwise.

More important, in the long run, is Carroll's open contempt for moral relativism, whether in public life or in private.

Relativism is the doctrine that moral certainty is unobtainable, vice and virtue existing only as mental concepts in relation to a given set of circumstances. For the past century and more, in familiar debate, that has usually meant social or genetic circumstances. In its most absolute form, it amounts to a denial of moral knowledge. We cannot be said to "know" the difference between right and wrong, in the relativist view; and the phrase, common as it is, is radically misconceived.

Relativism was not, in any simple sense, a party issue in Victorian times. Neither the Conservative nor Liberal party, that is to say, can be called relativist in its view of man's moral nature, in the radical sense that Fascist and Communist parties in our own century have plainly been. The difference between the two great Victorian parties lay rather in their view of how moral knowledge was derived. To the Liberal, and above all the Gladstonian mind, such knowledge was most characteristically seen within the framework of timeless concepts of truth and justice; to the Tory, it was more readily conditioned by ancient custom and circumstance. To that extent, the Tory mind was consciously less self-righteous than the Liberal: more flexible, and above all less dogmatic in utterance. Tories were inclined to find Liberals morally overcertain. There is a famous remark attributed to a Tory opponent of Gladstone: "I don't mind his always having a trump up his sleeve, but I greatly resent his telling us it was God who put it there." Many years later Winston Churchill, by then a Conservative, remarked of his old Liberal chief Herbert Asquith that he "knew where he stood on every question of life and affairs in an altogether unusual degree"—a remark from *Great Contemporaries* (1937) that implies some mild criticism, beyond a doubt, of the moral certainties of the leader of Edwardian Liberalism. And in all that, Asquith had been a pure Gladstonian:

> On all, when the need required it, his mind opened and shut smoothly and exactly, like the breech of a gun. He always gave me the impression . . . of measuring all the changing, baffling situations of public and parliamentary life according to settled standards and sure convictions; and there was also a sense of scorn, lightly and not always completely veiled, for arguments, for personalities and even for events which did not conform to the pattern he had . . . decidedly adopted.

Churchill added in true Tory fashion that this was a limitation, since men are not like machines, and "nature never draws a line without smudging it." But when Churchill remarks that Asquith's opinions were "cut in bronze," he might have been writing of Gladstone: it was a complaint that had been commonly made against the Liberals, by the 1930s, for a hundred years.

In one of his earliest tales, for example, the young Disraeli had mocked at the confident

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recourse of the founders of liberal political economy to "first principles"; and in *The Voyage of Count Popanilla* (1828) Disraeli's scorn, though ironically couched, is transparent: "First principles are the ingredients of positive truth. They are immutable, as may be seen by comparing the first principles of the eighteenth century with the first principles of the nineteenth." So first principles are little more than what the place and time encourage us to imagine that they are. To the Tory mind, relativism is at least better than the smug cant of Liberal dogmatism; and the instant appeal to first principles in morality and politics was for Disraeli nothing better than cant.

In all that Carroll was a Disraelian, and his scorn for the certainties of Radicals was unfailing. We cannot hope to know enough to be in that degree certain. "You can't look all round you," the Sheep snaps at Alice in *Through the Looking-Glass*, "unless you've got eyes at the back of your head" (chap. 5). Alice has merely been betrayed by a polite phrase here—"I should like to look all round me first, if I might"—and she nowhere shows any propensity to take things back to first principles. She is the model of the commonsensical child, first to last.

The skepticism of Victorian Toryism looks faint and mild, admittedly, compared with the radical skepticisms of the late twentieth century, whether they are based on claims about social conditioning, Marxist-style, or on theories of language. Radical skepticism of the latter sort is nowadays commonly based on what Saussure called "the Arbitrariness of the Sign," or the undoubted linguistic truth that words—onomatopoeia apart—relate only arbitrarily to what they are about. Carroll accepted the arbitrary principle of language, like Hobbes and Locke before him, and Saussure after; he is in no doubt at all that words and names merely happen to be what they are. "*Must* a name mean something?" Alice reasonably asks in *Through the Looking-Glass*, when Humpty Dumpty unreasonably demands to know what her name means (chap. 6). Three chapters earlier, when the Gnat had asked her if she wanted to lose her name, Alice had replied, "No, indeed," but she shows a sturdy sense of the Arbitrary when she rejects the Gnat's suggestion that her governess, if she did, would be forever unable to summon her to lessons. Anybody can see there is something the matter with that.

Humpty Dumpty, by contrast, simply does not understand the Principle of the Arbitrary at all: "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean. . . . The question is which is to be master—that's all." And anybody, equally, can see there is something the matter with that. Carroll's object here is presumably to reinforce our sense of language as something justly imposed upon us, for the most part; we are free to use it, but we are not altogether free to misuse it, as Humpty Dumpty imagines: at least we pay for that misuse if we do. It is an easy step, admittedly, from seeing language as imposition toward radical skepticism and solipsism, but there is good reason to think it a step that Carroll always rightly refused to take. Four years later, in *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876), he vividly illustrated its folly by imagining a ship's crew convinced that the Principle of the Arbitrary, or what Carroll calls the "conventional," necessarily made words and maps meaningless:

> "What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and Equators,
> Tropics, Zones and Meridian Lines?"
> So the Bellman would cry: and the crew would reply
> "They are merely conventional signs!"

So there is no doubt at all where Carroll stood in that matter: the Arbitrary (or Conventional) Principle of language does not, as Parisian critics like Barthes and Derrida were later to suppose, in any way deprive it of its descriptive force. But there is an exquisite and mysterious passage in *Through the Looking-Glass* that might be thought—I believe mistakenly—to incline in a direction that radical skeptics like Barthes or Derrida could have approved. Alice has just left the Gnat, whose grasp of linguistic theory is plainly unreliable, and enters the Wood where Things have No Names to meet a fawn. Since there are no names there, the fawn cannot know it is a fawn, or Alice that she is a child. So they walk affectionately together to the edge of the wood, where the fawn suddenly shakes itself in alarm, exclaiming "I'm a fawn," and then "Dear me, you're a human

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child," and bounds fearfully away. All that is very unsettling to a conviction that words, signs, and names are merely arbitrary—the more so because Alice Liddell was after all the daughter of a famous lexicographer. In fact, Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* had appeared nearly thirty years earlier, in 1843. What are we to make of it? A fawn does not need to know that name for its species, or any other name, in order to be afraid of human beings. I suggest, a little uncertainly, that Carroll's point here is intensive. We already know—or guess—that the Gnat's views about language are wrong. But if they were right, and one could only know something by knowing its name, then we should never understand any situation until we had used a word for it. That seems to be the fantastic hypothesis offered by the story of Alice and the fawn. But not all truths are propositional, and we do not have to master language in order to master situations. Fawns avoid people without using words at all.

In one of his last books, *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893), Carroll was to tell the story of a foolish German geographer called Mein Herr who made a map "on the scale of a mile to the mile"—only to discover, of course, that it could never be used.

> "It has never been spread out yet," said Mein Herr: "the farmers objected: they said it would cover the whole country, and shut out the sunlight! So we now use the country itself, as its own map, and I assure you it does nearly as well." (p. 169)

The anecdote is justly celebrated among philosophers, since it illustrates the neglected truth that accuracy and precision are not the same thing, and that a description can be the more usefully accurate for being the less precise. We need imprecisions and omissions in order to understand the world at all; and a map or description that tried to tell everything would end by telling nothing.

But at the heart of all that, as so often in Carroll, lies what may be called the Great Conservative Nightmare: I mean a fear that radicalism in some sweeping and absolute sense might, at least momentarily, triumph in the real world, at the hands of those unable to understand the merits of imprecision. Suppose some crack-brained intellectual like Mein Herr or the White Knight took power, so Carroll invites us to imagine—impelled by some insensate desire to sweep clean and start afresh. That is the nightmare of "complete revolution," as Burke once indignantly called the French Revolution: not just reform, but an attempt to start the whole world anew. Even in so solemn a matter, Carroll always strives to make his nightmares sound amusing. But they are not amusing in their nature, and they reflect his abiding fear of righteous, clever people—righteous and clever, that is, in their own estimation of themselves, as complete revolutionaries often are—who invent unworkable things and pull down traditional frameworks in a mad rush to see whether or not their ideas will work.

But there is no completeness in life itself, and we had better not try for it. To the *Alice* books—both of them—the famous conservative adage might aptly stand as a motto: "If it works, don't fix it." In *Through the Looking-Glass* the White Knight invents a "clever pudding" made of blotting paper, gunpowder, and sealing wax (chap. 8). Needless to say, it is never cooked—just as Mein Herr's enormous map is never used. And, again needless to say, it would have been uneatable if it had been. There are schemes of which it can confidently be said that we do not have to try them in order to know that they do not work.

On such propositions as that, no doubt, Tories and Liberals could once agree, and still can. But *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* suggest a mind more resistant to change, and more polemically intent on resisting it, than any mere truism or adage would suggest. They suggest the skepticism of a crusty don who, having composed two little masterpieces before he was forty, was to alter his view of public affairs only little, if at all, before his death in 1898. That view was not totally opposed to all reform. Lewis Carroll, or the Reverend Charles Dodgson, was too eccentric and too inventive to be bound by any single view of the world; and causes like animal rights and proportional representation might have their place of honor, for a time, in his lively and gaily-figuring mind. But he would remain derisive, early and late, of any attempt to transform or even define, whether by legislation or by fiat, the nature of man as he is.

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Rather Be Read Than Dead

FROM MODERN TO CONTEMPORARY: AMERICAN POETRY, 1945–1965. *By James E. B. Breslin. University of Chicago Press. $20. Paper, $9.95.*

INTROSPECTION AND CONTEMPORARY POETRY. *By Alan Williamson. Harvard University Press. $17.50.*

TWENTIETH CENTURY PLEASURES: PROSE ON POETRY. *By Robert Hass. Ecco. $17.95.*

AMERICAN POETRY AND CULTURE, 1945–1980. *By Robert von Hallberg. Harvard University Press. $22.50.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Nearly forty-five years ago, in July 1941 in an article in the *New Republic* entitled "Contemporary Poetry Criticism," Randall Jarrell called poetry both "an aesthetic object" and "an unimportant commodity for which there is a weak and limited demand." One of the four new books of contemporary poetry criticism before us insists that the situation has improved, that (in Robert von Hallberg's claim) there now exists "a stable poetry audience, still miniscule, but not so small as it was a half-century ago." But it could also be claimed that the situation has worsened since Jarrell made his claim. The contemporary poetry scene is so fragmented and diffuse that one can plausibly come away with all varieties of conclusions, depending on the viewer's own role or position.

So from where I stand, as a teacher and critic who is not a poet: Last fall I taught a heavily enrolled course in modern and contemporary satiric fiction (146 students) that contained many serious athletes not very successfully trying to come to terms with the likes of Evelyn Waugh. In the spring term I taught a course in modern and contemporary American poetry to thirty-nine students, athletes noticeably absent. In the coming semester there are sixteen people enrolled in my survey course, Pope to Tennyson—six more than turned up when I taught Dryden to Byron two years ago. My point is that even in a serious liberal arts college, poetry is still caviare to the general public, and not to students only. Few members of my English department are to be caught in the library signing out books of verse by contemporaries, American or otherwise; these colleagues, and other members of the academic community, may keep up with Bellow or Updike, but not with A. R. Ammons or Robert Penn Warren. Life is short: there is still Dante or Gibbon or Proust to come to terms with—and there are all those interesting films to watch.

A part of me sympathizes with the avoidance of contemporary poetry; feels a real disinclination to engage with yet another slim volume; finds the absence of "form" in much or most contemporary work a disabling one; is simply bored by what too many poets think may pass as interesting observation line by line; doesn't hear often enough the rhythm of a compelling music. And the problem (my problem anyway) grows more acute when we move from the poetry to critical studies of the poetry, this criticism itself frequently written by younger American poets. Of the four names at hand, Alan Williamson and Robert Hass have published books of verse, while James Breslin and Robert von Hallberg have not (whether they write verse I don't know). Except for Mr. Hass, whose book is a collection of occasional pieces, each of them puts forth an argument—or at least begins to put forth an argument—about what has been going on in American poetry since the Second World War. And all of them, including Mr. Hass, seem on the whole to be pleased with what they see.

James Breslin, who has previously written a book about William Carlos Williams, stakes out the twenty years between 1945 and 1965 as the ground for a movement from "modern to contemporary," and his assumptions about that change are couched in familiar metaphors: from closed to open, from bound to free. The prevailing recognition by fifties poets was that modernist poetry had reached (in Jarrell's phrase, which Breslin uses to title his first chapter) "the end of the line" and that it was time for what Breslin terms a "retreat to preexisting positions," to a "stance of accommodation," to the "well-made autotelic poem as a kind of secular eternity." He draws his example from the early work of Adrienne Rich and Richard Wilbur (later, says Breslin approvingly, "Rich gets into more intimate

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touch with her disruptive impulses"). Henceforth in his book this really quite unlikely pair is yoked as exemplary formalist twins whose well-made stanzas will increasingly be subverted—by dissident fifties elements (the work of Charles Olson, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley) and by the five poets whom Mr. Breslin selects for extended treatment in the remainder of his book (Allen Ginsberg, Robert Lowell, Denise Levertov, James Wright, and Frank O'Hara).

The list seems to me an unpromising one, and the book itself gradually turns into a series of overlong discussions of each poet's work. (How long is overlong? Breslin's essays on Wright and Levertov and O'Hara are longer than R. P. Blackmur's on Yeats and Stevens and Pound.) The essays contain many just and accurate, if unsurprising, observations; yet I wished that Mr. Breslin would show less enthusiasm for, or at least have more mixed feelings about, his favorites, so as to make him think twice before announcing, proudly, that "unlike Wilbur and Rich, Ginsberg does not seek a cautious self-insularity." Hooray for Ginsberg and openness, but is "cautious insularity" really the term for those baroque castles Wilbur built in his first three volumes from the late forties and early fifties? There is nothing cautious about the verbal extravagance of such poems as "Objects" or "Beasts" or "Castles and Distances." Whereas the "open" poem as practiced by James Wright (who receives over-respectful treatment in three of these books of criticism) gets good marks far too easily, as in his much-anthologized "A Blessing" ("Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota"). In that poem the narrator sees a couple of Indian ponies, and the sight so moves him that in the last lines he announces: "Suddenly I realize / That if I stepped out of my body I would break / Into blossom." Mr. Breslin's comment: "[The poem] does not move toward a moment of transcendence but toward an intuited confidence in the surrounding environment, both visible and invisible, as a supportive context. . . . [Wright] boldly enacts a blossoming, an opening, of the self." Kingsley Amis has remarked that whenever something is described as "experimental," he knows it is bound to be bad. I feel somewhat that way about all "blossomings," "liberations," and "openings of the self"—indeed about any theory or history of recent American poetry that starts with the fifties as a decade to be celebrated only for its dissidence from restrictive forms, while what follows will be mainly healthy release.

This may be simplifying James Breslin's tack, but I think he needs to cast a colder eye on the releasers—as indeed another Breslin already has—namely, Paul Breslin in "How to Read the New Contemporary Poem" (THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Summer 1978). Paul Breslin disparages the "surrealism" (sometimes known as "deep image" poetry) he finds in Charles Simic, Robert Bly, James Wright, Mark Strand, and others, noting that it is "supposed to be terribly mysterious, profound stuff" and suggesting by his irreverent tone that it is nothing of the sort. In going on to point out and document the "stock rhetoric of portentousness" put in the services of "mysteries" that are "only the trivial mystifications of cant and code," Paul Breslin seems to me to have told home truths, right down to his closing insistence that "critics of contemporary poetry will have to stop talking the same cant as the poets—a circular demand, for the critic of contemporary poetry is, more often than not, a poet as well."

In *Introspection and Contemporary Poetry*, Alan Williamson, who has previously written a good book about Robert Lowell, calls Paul Breslin's essay "fascinating," and he has himself many sharp things to say against what he calls the "anti-verbal aspect of contemporary surrealism." Indeed, on one occasion he is bold enough to refer to a Charles Simic poem (which contains the sequence "José wants to punch his wife / in the mouth") as "dreadful," a refreshing thing to have said. Still, he seems to me to go soft on John Ashbery, whom Williamson, at the end of a longish essay, calls uneven and repetitive, yet declares nevertheless that he is "fascinating—if not indeed indispensable—as a tragic epistemologist, in whose work the demystifying intelligence of the twentieth-century avant-gardes enters into a dialectic with the highest claims, emotional and aesthetic, of Romanticism and Symbolism." Ashbery, he goes on to say, "touches greatness by his extraordinary command of montage, rhythmic progression and the half-focused image. . . ." This seems to be more or less high-sounding nonsense uttered about Ashbery's word games, but it may also be the way a practicing poet feels compelled to

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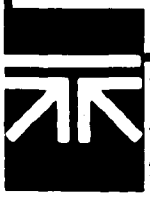

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speak about a contemporary whose operation has been as remarkably successful as Ashbery's.

On completing the book I did not feel that I had learned about Introspection and Contemporary Poetry, perhaps because it is not a "subject" to be learned about, even when (especially when?) psychological theorists such as R. D. Laing and Ludwig Binswanger are brought into the equation. Mr. Williamson is best for me when he drops psychology, or his fondness for the word *holistic*, and writes good appreciations—in a final chapter titled "The Future of Personal Poetry"—of interesting "personal" poets like Louise Glück, Frank Bidart, Richard Tillinghast, James McMichael, and Robert Pinsky. There is also a substantial, intelligently rendered and useful reading of Sylvia Plath. Williamson's practical criticism makes one rather forget that there is a thesis to his book, but in fact I don't think there is much of a thesis to forget.

Robert Hass has no theory and is a professed "appreciator," as one sees from the title of his book, *Twentieth Century Pleasures*. The first (excellent) piece of appreciation here is directed at Lowell's "Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket," and there are lengthy, careful approaches to Rilke and Milosz, as well as to two poets completely unknown to me—Tranströmer and Basho. When Mr. Hass comes to American poets, I feel less intimidated by them than by Tranströmer (about whose poem "Track" Hass says, "The clean sense of wonder . . . is something I have heard in Sappho and Tu Fu," which made me feel like really small potatoes). But I drew back politely on being told that Robert Creeley's poems contain "the one genuinely original verbal music in the English language in the second half of the twentieth century." In reading Hass, I was frequently bothered by the (designedly?) awkward expressions of "sincerity" in his dealings with poems, as if to suggest how hard it is to speak of them truly, without slickness. "I have been worrying the bone of this essay for days," he confesses, gearing up to write his piece on James Wright. *Like, feels*, and *very* are big-credit words in Mr. Hass's critical vocabulary: "I think I like especially . . ."; "It is what the stitching . . . in this passage feels like to me"; "There are things I love here"; "I feel some of the same emotion I have felt whenever I read or hear that famous speech [of Lear's]. . . . Sometimes I weep at the pathos of it, sometimes I want to weep with rage that that crazy old man has learned nothing"; "'The Thief' is a poem that I have liked a long time"; "This is the way I came at *Baltics* which I like to read." Such a kinda humble and kinda proud manner makes it hard, at least for this reader, to know just how to behave, except to agree that the critic is very "creative" and that what serves him well on occasions (he leavens talk about poems with talk about memories of childhood, his own children, life in California) sometimes comes out as self-indulgent. This book won the National Book Critics Circle Award last year, so evidently to many readers the self-indulgence wasn't perceived as such.

The jacket blurb by Donald Davie to Robert von Hallberg's book promises that "it will enrage, it will provoke." I did not become enraged and indeed was only mildly provoked by a chapter arguing that post–World War II "systems analysis" had an effect on the works of Creeley and Ashbery. But Mr. von Hallberg has surely written a book that (in Davie's other words) is "bold and original." It is also one that avoids (as the other books considered here do not) breaking down into a series of commentaries on particular poets. Von Hallberg has hit upon the strategy of skillfully alternating his discussions of individual poets, such as Lowell, James Merrill, and (surprisingly) Ed Dorn, with general topical chapters titled "Audience, Canon," "Tourists," "Politics," "Pop Culture," and "Suburbs." These topical chapters make certain that he will address the "culture" part of his book's title. For example, "Tourists" takes up the phenomenon of American poets going to visit or to live in Europe in the decade 1945–55, a decade (von Hallberg says) dominated by three conventional poetic subjects: "animals [almost always referred to by the more evocative biblical term 'beasts'], the fine arts [mainly this meant poems on past European painters and sculptors], and travel." (Charles Olson and William Carlos Williams were critics of such "travel poetry.") Mr. von Hallberg proceeds to select illustrative bits from travel poems by John Hollander, Adrienne Rich, Charles Gullans, James Merrill (whose "The Thousand and Second Night" von Hallberg declares, boldly and probably correctly, a

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"masterpiece" on the subject), by John Ashbery (his "mock-tourist" "The Instruction Manual"), and by Richard Howard and Richard Wilbur. After these illustrations, he pauses for a discussion of how post-war imperial American might was anxious to show itself as not just mighty, but as sensitive also—to monuments, to cultural traditions, to (in Pound's phrase) "the mind of Europe":

> To prove to others, and perhaps to ourselves too, that this phenomenal power was not monstrously raw and vulnerable to wit and sophistication, monuments had to be restored and written about—preferably with wit and sophistication.

This is a fresh way of thinking about, say, a poem like Wilbur's "A Baroque Wall-Fountain in the Villa Sciarra"—to see it as not just an artfully made aesthetic object, but as "part of America's cultural claims to global hegemony."

In defense of his seemingly optimistic beliefs about today's "stable poetry audience" and his conviction that many American poets since the war have shown "marked curiosity about the dominant American culture" and have written interesting poems about it, Mr. von Hallberg draws on examples I was glad to be nudged into reconsidering, like John Hollander's "Movie-Going" and his longish, thoroughly attractive couplet-performance, "New York." Or like Anthony Hecht's equally engaging narrative, "The Short End" (from *The Venetian Vespers*, 1979), which, even though he is uneasy with its "superficiality" (calling it "somewhat of a cheat"), von Hallberg brings before us in a way that demands a rethinking, assuming "we" thought about it first time around. And there is an especially nice bit of admiration in the final ("Conclusion: Suburbs") chapter of Robert Pinsky's long poem, *An Explanation of America*.

Robert von Hallberg's book is supplemented by a chapter that is the best treatment I have read of James Merrill's "stylistic manners" ("The proper word for Merrill's tone is *arch*"—this said without reproach) and by a highly arguable elevation of Lowell's *History* to the front of his achievement. These and other discussions in the book suggest—at the risk of projecting my own taste on him—that what von Hallberg calls the "cosmopolitan style" in American poetry is the one that best engages with "culture." It does this by moving out of and beyond the "introspection" rut of Alan Williamson's concern, and by making us feel the eccentricity or perversity of "deep image" surrealism, or of the suave, endless tributes to nothing but the language itself, à la Ashbery and company. For the critic interested in promoting an engagement between poetry and American culture, and in encouraging people other than academics (and poets) to read new verse, an eclectic taste and an accommodating habit of mind for all styles from Ammons to Zukofsky is the last thing required. Robert von Hallberg is a cosmopolitan critic whose preferences and brisk discriminations show him to be what Robert Graves's examiners once accused Graves of being—"a trifle temperamental." For, as they said to Mr. Graves, "It appears, indeed, that you prefer some authors to others."

"La littérature française, c'est moi"

GASTON GALLIMARD: UN DEMI-SIÈCLE D'ÉDITION FRANÇAISE. *By Pierre Assouline. Balland. Fr 98.00.*

Reviewed by PHILIP KOLB

Here is a book that fulfills the promise of its title and subtitle, being at once the biography of a man and the history of one half-century of publishing in France. It embraces the entire life of Gaston Gallimard (1881–1975), which is divided into ten periods of unequal length. The first period tells of the Gallimard family up to 1900, the second one of going to the war of 1914, and so on. Assouline's book gives a detailed, documented history, rich in anecdote, covering both world wars and thereafter.

Assouline begins by pointing out that, while France has had its share of great editors, Gallimard was the only one among those embarking on the adventure of a publishing career in the first decade of our century who, in the evening of his life, could look back, thumbing through the thick catalog of his

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publishing firm, and say, paraphrasing the words attributed to Louis XIV: "*La littérature française, c'est moi.*"

The fact cannot be questioned that he published almost all of the contemporary authors worth publishing. This book tells how he performed the feat of gathering them unto himself. The tale is the more extraordinary because Gallimard was, to begin with, a most unlikely candidate for such an achievement. It is curious to consider the case of a man who was to stand out so prominently in the world of publishing in his country, yet who began life with so little interest in literature. In his early years, he was more drawn by inclination to painting and theater.

His family history would fit into a novel by Balzac. His great-grandfather, born of the laboring class, had made his fortune installing oil-lamp lighting fixtures in the avenues of the capital during the reign of Louis-Philippe; by the time of his death, his family belonged to the leisure class. Paul Gallimard, the father, was an eccentric who turned away from the ways of the bourgeoisie to devote himself to collecting rare books and paintings, surrounding himself with artists. He impressed Edmond de Goncourt, who mentions him in his *Journal* for spending three thousand francs to commission the printing of an edition of a modern novel numbering just three copies. An intimate friend of Renoir, Paul Gallimard had a vast collection of his and other artists' impressionist paintings. Later he sold most of his paintings and turned his interests to cultivating actresses, haunting nightclubs, and becoming proprietor of two theaters.

His son received a good education at the Lycée Condorcet, but dropped out before finishing. At the age of twenty, Gaston Gallimard was mostly interested in living a life of leisure, like his father, preferring luxury, idleness, women, and friends. He had taken a job as secretary to the playwright Robert de Flers about the time when a group of young men began to publish a literary magazine they called the *Nouvelle Revue française*. In 1910, they decided they would like to start a small publishing firm, for which they needed a manager. The name of Gaston Gallimard was proposed, his chief qualifications being that he was available and could make a monetary contribution to the group. A contract was drawn up in May 1911, associating Gallimard with Jean Schlumberger and André Gide, each contributing twenty thousand francs.

That is how Gaston Gallimard became a publisher and began to pick up notions about the business of running a publishing firm. Although the biographer gives an ambiguous account at this point, evidence shows that Gallimard, at the outset, was merely a manager, or factotum, attending to correspondence and other material concerns, but having nothing to say about the acceptance or rejection of books. No record exists of his having been consulted when Proust's book was submitted and rejected. The preponderant role at that time was played by André Gide, the senior member of the group, who would discuss manuscripts with Jean Schlumberger and others. Assouline confirms that fact in his account of Roger Martin du Gard's *Jean Barois*. Schlumberger read the manuscript first, then Gide, who gave the verdict—"to be published without hesitation." Only afterward did Gallimard read it for his own pleasure.

It was not, in fact, until 1914, when a readers' committee was set up, that Gallimard was named a member of it and was in a position to express his opinion about texts under discussion. Meanwhile, the group had founded Copeau's Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier. Since Gallimard's own interests were primarily in the theater, he gave his wholehearted support to that enterprise. During the years 1911–14, the *N.R.F.*, as the group was called before the war, published about sixty books, printing a maximum of fifteen hundred copies each. The magazine, by 1914, had three thousand readers.

When war broke out, Gallimard's sole concern, as Assouline tells us without flinching, is to avoid service. He was, by his own admission, a coward. He tried every trick to keep out of the army, pretending insanity, going so far as to bribe a clerk (it cost two thousand francs) to have him listed as "deceased." He stopped eating and shaving, stayed in bed, trembled when anyone came into his room. Finally he had an eminent physician friend examine him. He had lost fifty-two pounds. A military doctor gave Gallimard a release. After some time in a sanatorium near Paris, he went to another one in Switzerland. While there, he visited some printing firms to learn about printing techniques and styles of font. By

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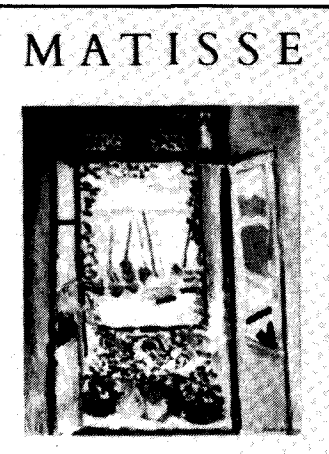

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1916, he had returned to Paris and was again active, keeping in touch with his authors, obtaining rights to publish French translations of Gordon Craig's *Art of the Theatre* and Joseph Conrad's work. When Copeau took his troupe to New York, Gallimard joined him.

At war's end, a crisis arose as to who would be appointed the editor of the *N.R.F.* magazine. The obvious choice was Jacques Rivière. When Schlumberger objected, Gide's name was proposed. At that point, Claudel threatened to withdraw from the group, the name of Gide signifying for him pederasty and anti-Catholicism. So Rivière took charge.

Soon afterward (July 26, 1919), the Librairie Gallimard was incorporated, and from that time onward, Gallimard was the editor in his own right. He persuaded his brother Raimond Gallimard, an engineer, to join the firm, lending a semblance of order to matters of finance and administration. For the first time, the cost of book production was taken into consideration. Raimond and Gaston worked in tandem. When an author, a printer, or a journalist was bothersome, one of the two would give the stock reply: "I'll talk to my brother about it. He's the one who makes the decisions." Raimond was methodical, Gaston a mere improvisor. A good example of the latter's manner of dealing with people has to do with the formation of the new company, in which he had three hundred shares. Rivière, on the other hand, an able editor who had no outside income, received only a modest salary on which to live and support a wife and children. Gallimard informed him that he was to receive thirty of Gallimard's own shares of stock in the new company. But that was the last Rivière ever heard about "his" shares. When Rivière died, in 1925, as a result of ill health from his war experience, his widow never received the shares. Jean Paulhan, Rivière's assistant, took possession of all his correspondence, including valuable autograph letters from known writers. Today there exists a vast collection of such documents, obviously belonging to Rivière, bearing the stamp: "Archives Paulhan."

In 1919, the N.R.F. published the second part of Proust's novel, which was awarded the prestigious Goncourt Prize. It was the first N.R.F. book to win the prize. It is generally believed that the rise of the firm of Gallimard in future years was principally owing to the financial gains and the prestige it derived from its publication of *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*Remembrance of Things Past*).

After the war, Gallimard founded a new monthly, *La Revue musicale*, and in 1922, *Les Nouvelles littéraires*. This was an astute move, since any literary critic who collaborated with the N.R.F. could hardly refuse to give favorable reviews of the firm's books. And the N.R.F. was, at that time, responsible for about one-fourth of the best books being produced in France. Later, Gallimard was to found a popular magazine, *Détective*, which was to be his only commercial success.

Gallimard began to make a concerted effort to obtain a monopoly of literary prizes. In the years from 1919 to 1935, his firm was to win eight out of seventeen Goncourt prizes, far more than his competitors. After the war, politics and intrigue entered more and more into the selection of the Goncourt awards. Another important initiative of the firm was the acquisition of the Pléiade series, which published more than three hundred authors of all periods, in bound volumes on bible paper. Proust's novel was issued in a three-volume set in 1954, with fourth and fifth volumes containing his other works in 1971. At the present writing, a new four-volume annotated edition of his novel is in preparation from his manuscripts.

During Gallimard's administration, his firm was notorious for inefficiency. For example, one author obtained a judgment against the firm for two hundred thousand francs for having lost his manuscript. On the other hand, Jean Giono signed simultaneously two contracts granting exclusive rights to his books to Gallimard and to his closest competitor, Bernard Grasset.

In 1932, Gallimard signed a contract with the century-old firm of Hachette, granting it exclusive rights for the distribution of books, on favorable terms. That contract assured Hachette a near monopoly.

When in 1940 the German army occupied France, Gallimard's firm found itself in a delicate position because its publications included a wide spectrum of Communist and Jewish writers. Gallimard, totally indifferent to ideologies, politics, morality, or any other principles, set himself the one purpose of continuing operations at all costs. The authorities soon put a padlock on his firm and

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threatened to take over. What saved it was the presence on Gallimard's staff of Drieu la Rochelle, the ideal fascist, who was the firm's alibi, its indispensable collaborator. In exchange for an agreement to allow Drieu to edit the *N.R.F.* magazine for five years, Gallimard obtained permission to reopen his establishment and resume the publication of books—under censorship, of course, of the German authorities. Assouline tells the whole history of that sordid period in a chapter that gives a "Who's Who" of France under the occupation. He names Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and all the others, too many to enumerate here, specifying their manner of collaborating. Gallimard steered an ambivalent course, one full of contradictions. Most of the writers vied with one another to collaborate, while only a few publishing houses refused to do so (Emile-Paul was one exception). Jean Guéhenno was one of the few writers who refused to publish anything as long as the Nazis were in power. De Gaulle preferred to punish writers (Céline, Drieu la Rochelle, Maurras, Montherlant, and Pierre Benoit were banished), being lenient toward publishers. He considered that they represented French literature. In consequence, little was changed in publishing after the return of democratic government, except that three Jewish houses were allowed to reopen. Gallimard had to solicit testimonies of his "good conduct" during the occupation from his friends, and he managed to escape punishment for his collaboration. It was "business as usual" for him, except that he had to wait ten years to resume publication of the *N.R.F.* magazine.

In 1970, when the contract with Hachette was about to expire, Gaston's son Claude broke the contract and decided to organize an independent distribution of books. At that point, Gaston had, in fact, retired, although he continued to be titular head of the firm and attended its meetings. Assouline does not hide the fact that Gaston had always known how to be charming, witty, kindly, but he had been essentially a self-centered, calculating businessman, and not above making mistakes.

The book opens and closes on the death of Gaston Gallimard, the greatest publisher of his time in France, as his son Claude assumes the official title as his successor.

Sane Genius

ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD: THE MAN AND HIS WORK. Volume 1. 1861–1910. *By Victor Lowe. Johns Hopkins University Press.* $27.50.

Reviewed by JOSEPH GERARD BRENNAN

On finishing Victor Lowe's long-awaited first volume of his biography of Alfred North Whitehead, an irreverent reader might be tempted to paraphrase that other eminent Victorian, Sherlock Holmes: "There was the curious incident of Whitehead at Cambridge," says the great detective. "But Whitehead did nothing remarkable at Cambridge," protests Watson. Holmes's classic rejoinder would in this case be: "That was the curious incident."

Of course the joke does not fit the facts all that well. Alfred North Whitehead accomplished a great deal at Cambridge. He arrived there from Sherborne School, a Kentish clergyman's son, bearing prizes in mathematics and scholarship. He was Fourth Wrangler at Trinity, won a fellowship and a lectureship in mathematics, was elected to that elite Cambridge group, the Apostles (though not until his twelfth term), wrote the first volume of his *Universal Algebra* (the second volume was not written), made a brief call on the aged Cardinal Newman, veered off from a close encounter with the Roman Catholic Church, proposed in a cave to the drama-loving woman who became his wife, collaborated with his brilliant pupil Bertrand Russell in writing the three-volume *Principia Mathematicia*, and completed twenty-five years of teaching mathematics at Cambridge before leaving for London, where he soon took up a post at the university there.

All the same, Whitehead's life—at least up to 1910, the terminal date of Lowe's first volume—seems full of strange blanks and is oddly lacking in color. We expect our geniuses to have at least a few idiosyncrasies—not as extreme, perhaps, as some of the more arcane capers of Russell or the eccentric be-

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havior of Whitehead's Trinity classmate Connop Williams, who rode his pony up to his rooms, won a fellowship, and was later found mad—though not, as in another Holmes case (for the publication of which the world is still not prepared), staring at a matchbox in which reposed a worm of a species unknown to science.

For Whitehead *was* a genius. Gertrude Stein heard her genius-bell announcing the presence of such prodigies only three times in her life: Whitehead was one of these, and the other two were Picasso and herself. Even as graduate students in philosophy at Harvard, my classmates and I knew that the author of *Science and the Modern World*, *Process and Reality*, and *Adventures of Ideas* was a genius. We sat at Whitehead's feet (literally, since his desk in Emerson Hall, which had served his predecessors, William James and George Santayana, reared itself on a high platform), awed by his reputation, delighted by the wit and philosophical insight of this mild-mannered sage who had abandoned his mathematical chair in London to come to Harvard, where he began to do metaphysics at the age of sixty-three. It was not some woolly-brained "Great Ideas" professor who described *Principia Mathematica* as "one of the great intellectual monuments of all time." That assessment was made by the hard-nosed mathematical logician Willard Van Orman Quine. (Lowe quotes this assessment in his biography without attribution to its important source, adding ruefully, "Monuments aren't alive and the book had little influence on living mathematics.")

But of color, Whitehead had almost none; and Lowe admits that the lack of it, as well as the absence of documentation, made his task as a biographer difficult. "A life of Whitehead," he says, "is bound to be lacking in spice," adding that he has uncovered no evidence of Whitehead's ever having broken off a friendship, indulged in a liaison, or carried on public controversy. One might object that Whitehead's friendship with Russell cooled sharply during the First World War when Whitehead, who lost a son in France, distanced himself from the violently pacifist Russell. But "broken-off" would indeed be too strong to describe the altered relations between them, which Lowe will doubtless deal with more fully in his second volume.

Whitehead appears to have been somewhat secretive by nature; he did not like to write letters, discuss friends, evaluate colleagues, or convey personal emotions in written word or public speech. For most of his Cambridge years, he attracted little attention, personal or intellectual. He gave few papers and wrote less. When his *Universal Algebra* appeared in 1898, it stirred the mainstream of mathematical scholarship not at all. Today the best that professional mathematicians can say about the volume is that "it has some good things in it."

Lowe is forced to eke out the blank spaces in Whitehead's personal life by conscientious expositions of his subject's mathematical writings, though Lowe modestly admits his limitations in higher mathematics. Nevertheless, *Universal Algebra*—in which Whitehead endeavors to extend the calculi of George Boole and Hermann Grassmann—gets more than ten pages in the biography, but few general readers will have the patience to stay with Lowe's careful explanations of such difficult concepts as the "manifold," which Whitehead develops in book two of his work.

Principia Mathematica, however, *is* an important work, one that had enormous influence on logic and the philosophy of logic of our century's first half. The famous Whitehead-Russell collaboration began in 1901 or 1902, and the first of the three volumes of the work appeared in 1910. It attracted the immediate attention of logicians and philosophers but left most mathematicians either indifferent or puzzled. Today the interest of the philosophical community has waned. In many circles it is considered gauche to take Whitehead seriously as a philosopher, and the erroneous impression that Russell did all the important work on *Principia* is widely held. Roger Scruton's short history of modern philosophy, *From Descartes to Wittgenstein* (1981), indexes neither Whitehead nor *Principia*.

Principia Mathematica, however, well deserves the two chapters that Lowe devotes to it. It is not just the *Finnegans Wake* of twentieth-century mathematical logic. Its basic concept of the relation of mathematics to logic has spread so widely that it is indeed an unusual high-school textbook of mathematics that does not include it in the introduction as a received idea. At the foundation of *Principia* lies the "logicist" thesis that all mathematics is de-

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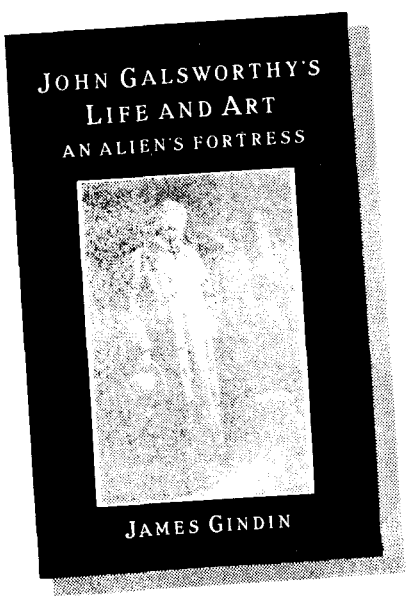
ducible from logic—formal, deductive logic, that is, of the kind once labeled "symbolic." The idea that all mathematics follows from the laws of logic seems to have been constructed independently by Russell, Frege, and Peano. Whitehead himself formulated a version of the thesis before his collaboration with Russell. Lowe deserves much credit for bringing this out, for it has been usual to credit Russell with the proclamation of the thesis and not his senior partner. Before the collaboration, Whitehead had passed beyond the concept of mathematics as simply the science of magnitudes or quantities, suggesting instead that it is "the science concerned with the logical deduction of consequences from the general premises of all reasoning." Later Russell's vatic pupil Wittgenstein made explicit what he found in Russell's work—that all the propositions of formal science, including mathematics and logic, are tautologies. "I know nothing about the weather," said the Vienna genius, "when I know that it is raining or it is not raining."

Whitehead would not go along with this line of thought, which quickly solidified into a dogma of twentieth-century positivism. From his earliest Cambridge years to his last Harvard days, Whitehead insisted that mathematics has something to do with reasoning and that reasoning could not be disconnected from the world. Here lay the germ of the metaphysics of his years in America. There he ended by claiming that mathematics could not be cut off from the Good, nor logic from the Beautiful. Those of us who heard his valedictory address at Harvard during the December 1936 meeting of the American Philosophical Association recall the old metaphysician's tracing of the philosophy of the future: "We thus end with my first love—Symbolic Logic. . . . I suggest that symbolic logic, that is to say the symbolic examination of patterns with the use of real variables[,] will become the foundation of ethics. From that stage it will proceed to conquer ethics and theology. The circle will then have made its full turn and we will be back to the logical attitude of the epoch of St. Thomas Aquinas."

Why Russell got the lion's share of credit, Lowe, in his dogged fashion, makes relatively clear. Russell was chiefly responsible for the philosophy of logic implicit in the work while the mathematics of it constituted Whitehead's



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principal concern. Russell's mathematical proofs were often sketchy, and Whitehead had to go over them carefully, redoing them to make sure they were airtight. When *Principia* appeared, logicians and philosophers, not mathematicians, greeted it as a new revelation. Philosophers of logic were less interested in the mathematics of the enterprise than in the underlying logicist thesis associated with Russell and Frege. They were bemused as well by Russell's discovery, communicated to Frege, that certain paradoxes, such as the puzzle of the class of all classes that are not members of themselves, suggest the frightening possibility that the logicist thesis, when applied, cannot be shown to generate deductive systems free of internal contradictions. Russell bravely attempted to deal with the threat by his Theory of Types. This put self-referring statements outside the *piano nobile* of the Palazzo of Logic. So, to change the metaphor, it is not logical cricket to take Epimenides the Cretan's claim that "All Cretans are liars" as referring to himself. Such logical sleight of hand fascinated the philosophical community far more than Whitehead's sturdy mathematical proofs. Whitehead, too many concluded, did the dog work on *Principia* while the more brilliant Russell led the way to the new Jerusalem of Symbolic Logic, a land where all the problems of philosophy would be surgically removed by logical scalpels.

The truth of the matter, as Lowe correctly sees it, is that the enterprise was genuinely collaborative and that credit should be evenly divided. Over the years since the appearance of *Principia*, both Russell and Whitehead repeatedly responded in this way to inquiries about the nature of their joint work. Lowe puts it simply: Whitehead brought the thinking of his unwritten second volume of *Universal Algebra* to the enterprise while Russell did the same with the unwritten second volume of his 1903 *Principles of Mathematics*.

That two such utterly different personalities as Whitehead and Russell could stick together for years on a project of this magnitude is as remarkable as the joint work they produced. Whenever Bertrand Russell appears on stage with Whitehead in Lowe's biography, Lowe has a hard time keeping the spotlight on his own man. While the Cambridge pair were working on the first volume of *Principia*, Russell was falling out of love with his first wife, Alys Pearsall Smith, saying such uncharitable things about her as "stupidity is really the main thing in her character." At the same time, Russell was casting an amorous eye in the direction of Mrs. Whitehead, a woman whom an older generation would have described as "striking." In his biography of Russell—an easier task than Lowe's of Whitehead, since Russell rarely hesitated to make his private life public—Ronald Clark tells the story of Russell's attentions to Mrs. Whitehead, much of it in the younger philosopher's not-quite-to-be-trusted words. According to Russell, Whitehead acted queerly in those days, muttering to himself, running up tradesmen's bills he knew he could not pay. (Lowe suggests, sensibly, that Mrs. Whitehead probably ran up a few bills of her own.) Russell said that at this time Evelyn was afraid her husband would go mad, an opinion even Russell thought was exaggerated. Lowe says that Robert Cathorne-Hardy, editor of Lady Ottoline Morrell's memoirs, personally told him (Lowe) that Mrs. Whitehead had an affair with Russell. Neither Lowe nor Russell's biographer Ronald Clark takes much stock in this allegation. Evelyn Whitehead, though fond enough of Bertie at the time, seems to have prevented any further collaboration on the part of Alfred's former pupil. Still, Russell later proclaimed his sentiment for Mrs. Whitehead in one of his dreadful love poems; the second stanza of "Thrice Have I Loved" makes it rather clear that Evelyn Whitehead was one of the trinity who inspired it.

Evelyn Wade Whitehead's people were country gentry, with military connections. Evelyn was brought up in France. Although an Anglican, she readily took to convent school, which was staffed by Roman Catholic nuns. Her imaginative, self-dramatizing nature found the confessional attractive; Lowe says she had to confess *something*. Disapproval of her marriage to Alfred came from two directions. Evelyn's mother thought her daughter was "marrying down"; she declined to attend the wedding and did not speak to her daughter again. On Whitehead's side, a Trinity colleague complained, "Whitehead has made a great mistake. He has married out of his tripos." Evelyn splendidly justified her choice of Alfred, declaring, "I never saw a man who needed me more." Through the

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early years of anxiety, the piratical forays of Russell, the loss of a son in the war, the marriage sailed on sturdily. Forty-odd years later the Whiteheads stood rock-firm together as they entertained Harvard graduate students with wit and cocoa in their apartment on Memorial Drive. Whitehead paid his wife tribute in print, stating that over the years she had taught him that Beauty was the aim of existence and that kindness, love, and artistic satisfaction were among its modes of attainment.

Lowe suggests that Evelyn Whitehead had much to do with her husband's decision to leave Cambridge after thirty years' residence there. Had he stayed on he might have become Professor, even Master. But Evelyn was not a social success at Cambridge. She made the dons' wives feel uncomfortable. She longed for the excitement of the theater, for great music, for bright entertainments of the sort dowdy Cambridge could not furnish. For his part, Whitehead declared that he felt himself in a groove after all those teaching years and gladly followed his wife's inclinations to newer scenes. Moreover, Whitehead's liberal orientation had been disturbed by the raucous Cambridge demonstration against the visiting Socialist Labour leader, Keir Hardie. He was angry at the forced resignation of a colleague, A. R. Forsythe, who eloped with a married woman. A firm supporter of women's suffrage, he lost patience with a university that would not grant degrees to women.

The Whiteheads moved to London where in due course he became Chief Professor of Mathematics at London University's Imperial College of Science and Technology. In London he wrote such transitional books as *The Concept of Nature*, which was based on a series of lectures given at Cambridge and published in 1920 by its university press. Here Whitehead considers epistemological questions raised by the new physics—an indication that his new philosophy was beginning to reveal itself. But not until he crossed the Atlantic and came to Harvard would the metaphysical time bomb ticking quietly in him all those years burst over Cambridge, Massachusetts, with that brilliant light his latter-day chronicler Lucien Price described as akin to "the white radiance of eternity."

Sensibly, Victor Lowe avoids such adulatory blurbs in his valuable first volume on Whitehead's life and works. Lowe's style is judicious, even a little dull. Here and there he tries to enliven it by exclamations: "What a wise man he was!" (Whitehead); "What a man!" (Russell). Familiar with logic as Lowe is, it is odd to find him repeatedly describing Whitehead's early attraction to the Roman Catholic church as a "serious flirtation," apparently unaware of the contradiction in terms.

Lowe's book was long in the making. Straws were not in full supply, and it was hard to construct a solid brick of them. But Lowe has managed to accomplish a solid beginning to his biography of Whitehead. Those who were Whitehead's students—as well as all who are interested in what this strangely gifted man, quiet and humane as he was, taught and lived—should be grateful that the first part of the task is completed. The second should be easier.

Thoroughly Modern Phil

PHIL SHERIDAN AND HIS ARMY. *By Paul Andrew Hutton. University of Nebraska Press. $29.95. Paper, $14.95.*

Reviewed by WAYNE MICHAEL SARF

Unfortunate the man who becomes an American symbol; whether cast as hero or villain, dehumanization is inevitable, his life and opinions reduced, perhaps, to some quotation or anecdote imagined to sum up all too neatly an American attitude—or perhaps even an era. Such an anecdote is that of the Comanche chieftain Toch-away, approaching in 1869 a council with the fierce "soldier chief" Lieutenant General Philip H. Sheridan, who had vowed to punish Indian raiders guilty of "depredations" against whites. "Me Tosh-a-way," offers the chief hopefully. "Me good Indian." With a quizzical smile, Sheridan replies, "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead."

Though it sounds like a characteristic Sheridan quip, both "Little Phil" and his brother, Colonel Michael Sheridan, always denied

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he'd made the statement, more commonly phrased "the only good Indian is a dead Indian"—for even in the mid-nineteenth century such sentiments were unpalatable to the more enlightened. Yet even though the motto, in one form or another, was already in all-too-common use at the time of the original accusation, Sheridan continues to be credited as the coiner of the phrase. It is the image of the vicious exterminationist that remains the most familiar modern rendering of Sheridan the Indian fighter—when he is remembered as an Indian fighter at all.

His was an American success story, with natural talent overcoming the handicaps of being, in Paul Hutton's phrase, "Irish, Catholic, short, and ugly." Born in 1831 in the Ohio backcountry, if not in Ireland or on the boat over, Sheridan had a warrior's fiery eyes, but also less prepossessing characteristics such as an oversized and bumpy head, stumpy legs, coarse black hair, a florid complexion caused by an irregular heartbeat, and a fierce temper. The latter he dramatically exhibited while at West Point by threatening an irritating cadet officer with a bayonet lunge, for which he was suspended. He finally graduated with low marks in 1854 and found himself a second lieutenant with the First Infantry in Texas, later participating in several Northwestern Indian campaigns.

The Civil War interrupted his frontier duty. Sheridan was promoted to captain but feared that the rebellion would be quelled before he could do his part and, *if* the war lasted long enough, possibly become a major. Instead, after leaving a quartermaster's job with the Army of the Southwest (where he had refused orders to buy stolen horses), he secured a colonelcy of cavalry and proved so capable that he was soon promoted to brigadier general of volunteers. Allegedly never in so good a humor as when under fire, Brigadier General Sheridan was seen at the Stone's River battle "with hat in one hand and sword in the other, fighting as if he were the devil incarnate, and swearing as if he had a fresh indulgence from Father Tracy every five minutes." Sheridan swiftly earned a second star and his own infantry division; and when Ulysses S. Grant went East as commander of all Union armies, Sheridan went with him to become chief of the Army of the Potomac's cavalry, which he energetically transformed into a truly effective striking force.

Sheridan showed a concern for his men that earned him their devotion—not simply because he cared for their needs in the field, but because he avoided exposing them to unnecessary danger. Much was expected of them. Competent but insufficiently aggressive officers were replaced, while Sheridan, after drumming out three cowardly officers—"three things wearing shoulder straps"—boasted that his commissioned casualties surpassed those of other divisions. His most famous exploit, "Sheridan's Ride," came after his appointment as commander of the Army of Shenandoah; learning that his men had been routed at Cedar Creek, Sheridan galloped to the field and by his presence rallied his men to rout the Confederates instead. His future in the postwar Army was assured when Lincoln commissioned him a major-general of regulars.

After the war, Sheridan, sent by Grant to Texas to help force a French withdrawal from Mexico, initiated a bizarre but successful form of "covert aid," declaring huge stocks of arms and ammunition useless and leaving them on the Rio Grande for anti-French rebels. This, alas, seems to have been the extent of his political subtlety. Though no racial progressive, Sheridan made admirable attempts during Reconstruction to suppress anti-black Texas night riders, protesting that the South's new Black Codes resulted in "a policy of gross injustice toward the colored people" by the courts. (His hard-edged view of the world displayed itself when he explained the obligation of authority to see that the freedmen "had a fair chance in the battle of life.") But Sheridan—who was later to refer to the writ of habeas corpus, in urging that it be suspended in Louisiana, as "the what-do-you-call-it"—tactlessly served these liberal ends with heavy-handed doses of force; President Andrew Johnson recalled him while denouncing his reign as one of "absolute tyranny, without reference to the principles of our government."

In 1868 frontier defense became Sheridan's prime responsibility as he assumed command of the Department of the Missouri, his worst trouble spot being the District of the Upper Arkansas, where he had available some twelve hundred mounted troops to control an estimated six thousand potentially hostile

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Indian warriors. When early campaigning against scattered parties raiding into Kansas proved futile, Sheridan first used a strategy he would later attempt to repeat whenever possible—a winter campaign striking snowbound villages of "hostiles," destroying the Indians' tepees and ponies, and capturing their women and children. Deprived of shelter, food, and mobility, the Indians would be not only punished for past raids, but unable to exist outside the reservation system. (To achieve this same end, Sheridan encouraged the extermination of the buffalo.) The campaign of 1868–69 resulted in a crushing blow by General George Armstrong Custer and his Seventh Cavalry over Black Kettle's Cheyenne encampment on the Washita River and an apparent vindication of Sheridan's risky strategy.

Sheridan proved less competent facing criticism of his campaign. Custer's Washita fight was denounced by Eastern humanitarians and others as a massacre of peaceful Indians; Sheridan struck back irrationally by accusing critics of corruption or of somehow endorsing Indian atrocities. Despite the broad consensus on the ultimate "civilizing" of the frontier, Sheridan's distasteful measures against the Plains tribes lacked the fervent nationwide support the hero had received during the Civil War; small wonder that he confessed "the greatest horror of popular demonstrations," for "those very men who deafen you with their cheers today are capable tomorrow of throwing stones and mud at you." In 1869 he was promoted to lieutenant-general and, with a characteristic distaste for Southern political duty, chose the command of the Division of the Missouri, a vast area incorporating a million square miles and most of the country's potential "hostiles." As commander, his loyal policy was to sustain subordinates involved in controversial actions. This policy produced a harsh outcry in 1870 when he attempted an ill-advised defense of Major Eugene Baker's misguided and murderous assault on a village of Piegan Blackfeet in Montana, which came complete with descriptions of atrocities committed by (other) Indians both irrelevant and decidedly un-Victorian in their lurid sexual detail. But as Sheridan and commanding general Willian Tecumseh Sherman agreed, there was no course of action that would not be assailed, whether by Indian sympathizers or

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frontiersmen demanding extermination.

By the time that Sherman had resigned as commanding general in 1884 (feeling it only just that Sheridan "should have his chance"), the secretary of war's power had already so eclipsed his own that Sherman felt himself barely more than a figurehead. His instinctively conservative successor had few startling innovations to offer, presiding over a tiny army handicapped by lack of funds, with a cliquish officer corps whose members were frequently sympathetic to the Indians they fought and were still often preoccupied by the glories of the Civil War. And, like Sheridan, they were prone to think of Indian campaigns as merely temporary interruptions to an age of peace. (The government seemed to endorse such sentiments, twice calling Sheridan to Louisiana duty in 1875–76 at a time when he was winding down one major Indian campaign and masterminding another destined to end in the Custer debacle.) An over-indulgent, long-ailing Sheridan died in 1888 at age fifty-seven, following a string of heart attacks and liver failure. He was awarded a fourth star by a grateful Congress during his final illness.

Such a prominent hero may suffer periodic revision to suit the needs or convenience of changing times. Initially, of course, Sheridan, along with Sherman and Grant, made up a triumvirate of Union saviors, with Little Phil the still-living hero of a poem no longer familiar to schoolboys ("Sheridan's Ride") though he might be recalled with more bitterness as the ruthless anti-guerrilla fighter and despoiler of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, or as a coarse apostle of Reconstruction bayonet rule. Sheridan's postwar frontier service—of picturesque but possibly deplorable wars against doomed aborigines—could scarcely compete, even with historians, as the great Civil War cast its massive shadow over several generations. But, as opinions of the white man's Manifest Destiny and the Indian's fate shifted, Sheridan's frontier role attracted more literary attention, much of it unfavorable. For, if the Indian Wars had proved divisive even in Sheridan's own confident era, what of the day when the white man's destiny seemed less noteworthy than his arrogance and folly?

By the 1930s the lines seemed drawn again. Colonel W. S. Nye, in his classic *Carbine and Lance* (1937), thought Sheridan precisely the medicine needed for Kiowas and Comanches who—after President Grant had divided the Indian agencies among various churches as part of his "Peace Policy"—had made their Quaker-run agency a raider's refuge. (One of Nye's chapter subtitles reads simply "The Indians Run Wild.") Nye, like Carl Coke Rister in his 1944 volume *Border Command*, believed that a "stern but just" Sheridan, making demands rather than waffling about treaties, was actually preferred by the Indians to vacillating philanthropists. But others differed, such as Charles Brill, who in his *Conquest of the Southern Plains* somewhat hysterically denounced Sheridan's Washita campaign as a stew of massacre and treachery against so-called "red knights." More important even than sympathy for the Indian was the passing of the "civilizing" ethos; surely Sheridan and his contemporaries could never have dreamed of a time when not merely the Indian's dispossession, but even the desirability of civilization itself, would be so often questioned.

Ironically, popular fascination with Indian Wars history (or pseudo-history) seemed to increase as disgust with modern values grew, the nadir being reached in the 1960s and 1970s when, as brutally efficient torchbearers of Caucasian enlightenment, such men as Sherman and Sheridan could remain heroes no longer, especially since the rhetoric of both men was strikingly absent of military euphemism. (Of the shooting death of the Kiowa chief Satank, Sherman wrote, "Hanging would have been better, but we can be content that he is now extinct.") Sometimes the rhetoric was even more ferocious than the men themselves. (What Sheridan talked of as a "campaign of *annihilation, obliteration* and *complete destruction*" against the Kickapoos produced few casualties.) Impiety toward these two total-war advocates found its masterpiece with a chapter in Dee Brown's *The Westerners* entitled "The Indian Slayers," the absurd text finding sinister motives even in Sherman's failure to sign his "Indian" middle name, while Brown indignantly accused him of fighting at Shiloh like a man in fear of failure—a fear of success being preferable, one assumes. As for Sheridan, his "only good Indian" comment—quoted inaccurately—safely damned him for Brown as a Nazi, even though the U.S. Army had in fact killed rather few Indians in the post-Civil War West. (Rogue

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anthropologist John Greenway, noting Sheridan's infamous remark, failed to change many minds in 1977 by writing: "Who could, after thinking of it, resist making the retort?")

The last few years have seen the wheel turn slightly—not to accommodate exalted notions of white destiny, but instead to permit wider acceptance of those historians who, usually at small profit to themselves, examine our Western Indian wars in the context of the 1800s. Unfortunately, in the strange world of frontier history, a book's popularity generally seems to be in inverse proportion to its accuracy or objectivity; yet even Evan Connell's best-seller *Son of the Morning Star*, a confused biography of Custer, presents neither red nor white as peculiarly vicious or virtuous. (The London *Daily Mail* even termed Connell's Custer admirable and a hero for the age of Reagan.)

Perhaps even Sheridan can surmount his simplistic characterization as symbolic Indian hater—and if he does, he will have received substantial aid from Paul Hutton's superb new biography, chronicling and explaining Sheridan's neglected contribution to frontier conquest while painting him against the broad backdrop of Victorian America and its military frontier. The picture is often ugly. Hutton quickly pinpoints Sheridan's least endearing characteristic—a "consistent demonstration of cruelty toward those he designated as enemies." Owing none of his harshness to ideological imperatives (Little Phil freely confessed that during the Civil War his mind had never been disturbed "by any discussion" of the questions out of which the war grew), Sheridan could direct it against Southern rebels as well as Indians—not to mention subordinates who had feuded with Sheridan, one of whom described him as "a selfish, weak, unscrupulous man." When rebel partisans killed one of his messengers, he had every house within a five-mile radius of the incident burned. Then, after wreaking desolation to make a "scapegoat" of elusive raider John Mosby, Sheridan bragged: "I will soon commence on Loudoun County, and let them know there is a God in Israel." Hutton aptly terms Sheridan—whose harshest measures were authorized by General Grant—as "completely brutalized" by the frustrations of guerrilla warfare.

The conservative Sheridan's thoroughly modern view of war is carefully examined. For one who has recently read John Ellis's *Social History of the Machine Gun* and its accounts of generals willfully ignoring the value of rapid-fire weapons (though curiously the dashing Custer was not, as Ellis states, among these), Sheridan is sometimes refreshing, pronouncing "all bayonets humbug" and concerned that single-shot Army weapons be replaced by repeaters. But the less endearing aspects of this "modernity" merely suited his more brutish instincts. War, for him, did not mean merely lines of men engaged in battle. "This is but a duel, in which one combatant seeks the other's life; war means much more, and is far worse than this." How much worse it could be Sheridan was prepared to demonstrate, noting unflatteringly that "reduction to poverty brings prayers for peace more surely and more quickly than does the destruction of human life." Sheridan even gave Bismarck advice on reprisals against guerrillas when he was an observer during the Franco-Prussian War, though Bismarck's orders on *Schrecklichkeit* exceeded even a Sheridan-like response; yet with the amazing optimism of his

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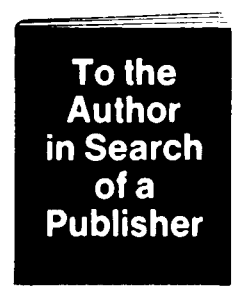

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day, Sheridan could predict in 1887 that such horrors would be eliminated by the terrific killing power in future armaments, with war giving way by 1987 to "arbitration."

With scrupulous fairness, Hutton attempts to document Sheridan's own form of rugged integrity, as well as his coarseness and ruthlessness; believing his good name the only legacy he could leave his family, he even failed to enrich himself despite the impressive opportunities of that corrupt era. Nor was Sheridan lacking in a sense of justice toward the Indian; capable of inflicting the most ruthless punishments even against such enemies as Chief Joseph and his gallant Nez Perces, Sheridan was more willing to help right Indian wrongs when he felt the military situation secure, even having white men's cattle ejected from the Cheyenne-Arapahoe reservation despite capitalist protests. Like most of his generation, Sheridan believed the free, "wild" Indian doomed by Fate and that strife was inevitable, particularly if the Indians were not fed and clothed by paternalistic government. "We took away their country and their means of support," he sadly admitted in 1878, "broke up their modes of living, their habits of life, introduced disease and decay among them, and it was for this and against this they made war. Could anyone expect less?"

Yet Sheridan could never have recommended another outcome. Though he had once lived with an Indian girl in the Northwest and even learned the Chinook trade language, his interest in things Indian seems summed up by his description of massed Indian warriors as a "scene of picturesque barbarism, fascinating but repulsive"; he might authorize studies of the Plains sign language and wish to preserve knowledge of Indian culture, but he seemingly never imagined that the culture of this "fading-out race" should itself be preserved or appreciated. But Hutton boldly states that Sheridan's "blunt approach to the Indians—that punishment should follow crime and that they must promptly conform to the government's wishes or be destroyed—was in many ways no worse than the slow cultural strangulation that the Indians' humanitarian friends had in mind for the tribes. Sheridan's position was at least made clear to the Indians." Resisting the temptation to impose more progressive views on the Gilded Age, and displaying no fashionable condescension toward the frontier's Indian fighters, Hutton captures the flavor of Sheridan's times and the attitudes of the regular army officers who saw themselves as guardians of the chivalric ideal in a materialistic world.

One might occasionally desire a different interpretation or emphasis than Hutton provides. His citation of a lieutenant who characterized Baker's Piegan raid as a complete slaughter might lead one to think that the officer (who in his official report praised a sergeant's good judgment in "destroying the lodges and in caring for the wounded squaws and children") might have been critical of the affair; but he actually appears to have been proud of his participation, referring to the raid in applying for the superintendency of Yellowstone Park as the "greatest slaughter of Indians ever made by U.S. troops." Nor might one automatically assume that Sheridan's refusal to ransom a white woman from her Indian rapists betokened a perverted chivalry requiring women to be salvageable only if unsullied, since Sheridan might naturally prefer military punishment to rescue by appeasement. And, while Hutton is careful to point out that Custer forbade the deliberate killing of noncombatants at the Washita and that it was "not a massacre," he might also have noted scout Ben Clark's statement that those killings actually committed were done by Osage Indian scouts rather than the men of the Seventh Cavalry.

But any such petty criticisms cannot diminish Hutton's achievement. From his work emerges a deeply flawed, but somehow heroic figure worthy of guarded respect if not affection. Throughout, Hutton displays a cool yet humane judiciousness much needed in this emotion-laden field of writing. If we are to ponder the grimmer aspects of our proud heritage, and the tragedies of our Indian Wars, we require works that will permit us to understand those who conquered the frontier, and the world in which they lived. *Phil Sheridan and His Army* is a major contribution to such understanding.

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

Weimar in America

In his review of Lewis A. Coser's book *Refugee Scholars in America* (Winter 1985/86), Wilfred McClay mounts a vitriolic attack upon what he calls "Weimar era" intellectuals whom he damns as rigid doctrinaire, disillusioned idealists and romantic Marxists (the oxymoronic concepts are his) trying to establish some sort of Gemeinschaft (poor old Max Weber, how did he get into this?) all of whom are violently anti-capitalist. In essence he depicts them as weeds that have grown in American soil and choked out a "vernacular American Culture." "Small wonder," he writes, "that free spirits like (*sic*) Wright, Brooks, Mencken, Mumford and Gershwin . . . have become nearly extinct species." Their extinction as major influences on the American scene comes as a surprise to me, as it will no doubt to others.

It is in the area of psychoanalysis that I wish to take issue. McClay asserts that "Heinz Hartmann and Co." (the company is never specified) imported and imposed upon the American psychoanalytic establishment a fundamentalist brand of Freudianism. "Thus the perdurable stereotype of the American psychoanalyst as a rigid dogmatist with a heavy Austro-German accent has considerable basis in fact."

Ignore for a moment the polemical and xenophobic style in which McClay engages. Surely the major influence of "Freudianism" is the work of Freud himself as translated by the Englishman James Strachey. This translation, though eminently scholarly, loses all of Freud's vivacity, flexibility, and pragmatism, succeeding to some extent in making him sound ponderous and rigid. Both Dr. Bettelheim and I have written deploring the effects of this translation on the English-speaking reader. The truth is that in twenty-seven volumes Freud's thought changes and develops as he learns from his patients. It is difficult to know, therefore, what Mr. McClay had in mind when he speaks of "Freudianism," quite apart from the fact that the enormous impact of Freud's writings can hardly be blamed on a cabal of escapees from Weimar (as though they did not escape from Hitler). One might also ask whether there would be any psychoanalytic establishment without Freud?

As for Heinz Hartmann, it is true that he attempted to cling to Freud's drive theory; however, he expanded the concept of the ego to such an extent that, in sharp contrast with Freud, he saw the ego's connection with reality as beginning much earlier than Freud would have placed it. Freud believed until the very last that the psychological equipment of the infant at birth consists entirely of drives. Hartmann postulates a much earlier ego. Otto Kernberg, Margaret Mahler, and Heinz Kohut (as eminent German refugee scholars they must sure qualify as part of the mysterious "and Co.") deviated even further from Freudian drive theory. Heinz Kohut finally attacks Freud, speculating that the training of all previous analysts has overlooked "disorders of the self," thus causing unanalyzed "Freud Idealizations." So much for the imposition by "Heinz Hartmann and colleagues of a fundamentalist brand of Freudianism delivered straight from the right hand of the Father."

Interwoven with the fallacy of German-refugee rigidity is the spurious idea that American-born psychoanalysts have been shoved aside. Obviously McClay has never heard of Harry Stack Sullivan, Harold Searles, Ralph Greenson, Peter Giovacchini, Thoms French, Rollo May, and Roy Schafer, to name just a few. This is quite apart from the influence of the English school of Fairbairn, Guntrip, and Winnicott. If any influence in American psychoanalysis can be seen as pernicious, it was its early capture by the American medical establishment, so that in this country almost no one who is not a medical doctor can call himself a psychoanalyst. This was a development that Freud clearly opposed in his essay "The Question of Lay Analysis." It is a situation that, through the vigorous efforts of psychologists and social workers, is beginning to change.

McClay ends by saying that a national perspective is not a nationalistic one. Unfortunately this

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halfhearted disclaimer does not ring true. McClay sees American scholarship as having been overrun by a "Bauhaus Blitzkrieg." Nothing could be further from the truth. It is the very strength of American scholarship and professional traditions that has afforded refugee scholars the rich soil in which their ideas grew and developed. Cross-fertilized by their American colleagues, refugee scholars have contributed their share to the enrichment of us all.

H. FRANK BRULL, ACSW
Winnetka, Illinois

WILFRED MCCLAY replies: Mr. Brull's closing remarks show how thoroughly he has misunderstood me. A "national perspective" simply recognizes that nationality is a central and ineradicable fact of the modern age; that the national cultures of this world are not interchangeable, or reducible to the terms of sociopolitical Esperanto; that each must be, to a considerable extent, understood on its own terms; that the fact of their nationality colors the way men and women think, particularly about politics and society. Yes, we were enriched by the refugees. Of course. My immense respect for many of them, and for certain aspects of Weimar culture, are made amply clear in the article, and repeatedly so. Dare one hope that, after fifty years, we could now begin to move beyond platitudes, into a more complex level of understanding? Surely the skeptical spirit of Weimar, at its best, demands a more skeptical approach to such an important subject; and, surely we do not honor these thinkers by holding them sacrosanct. Mr. Brull apparently will only be satisfied with unqualified and indiscriminant awe, and this I cannot offer him.

As for psychoanalysis: Brull is eager to establish that Freud was a more flexible and subtle (and inconsistent) thinker than many of his most dogged followers have generally understood. This assertion, with which I am inclined to agree, serves to support my argument, not refute it. Brull rehearses the ingenious thesis that would have us believe Strachey's translation single-handedly transforms the supple Freudian oeuvre into something "ponderous and rigid." The monstrous thought-structure called "Freudianism," it seems, was actually constructed by clumsy and uncomprehending Anglophones. The trouble with this argument, aside from its refusal to face the powerful tendency towards rigidity in Freud's own intellect and personality, is the plain fact that refugee psychoanalysts enjoyed positions of extraordinary eminence and influence during those very years of hardening orthodoxy. The refugees were not marginal figures in the field: they were at its center. And, as Paul Roazen has nicely put it in his study of Freud and his followers, Hartmann was "the prime minister of analysis" in America, a man who, moreover, bore considerable responsibility for the abstract and "metaphysical" style of discourse that sadly came to characterize the field's ever-so-intramural debates.

I do not for a moment deny Americans' complicity in the establishment of rigid orthodoxies, particularly through the exclusionary power of professional guilds. Indeed, Brull seems to have entirely missed my remarks on professionalization, which were directed at the very phenomenon he describes. I did not, for example, say that Wright, Mencken, etc., are no longer important in American life; I said that there are no *new* Wrights and Menckens, for which fact I blamed the professionalization, bureaucratization, and academicization of intellectual life—*not* the refugee intellectuals.

I have tried to point out the ironies that have attended our good fortune, and to suggest their continuity in American history. We are a prodigal people, and this truism applies with special vengeance to our intellectual life. We are disinclined to cultivate and cherish what is our own, and eager to appropriate uncritically, even mindlessly, whatever is not. Brull does not seem to understand that this is a criticism, not of those who have come to America, but of America itself.

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